





ESSAYS ON FAITH

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AND 'CHRISTIANITY AS AN IDEAL'

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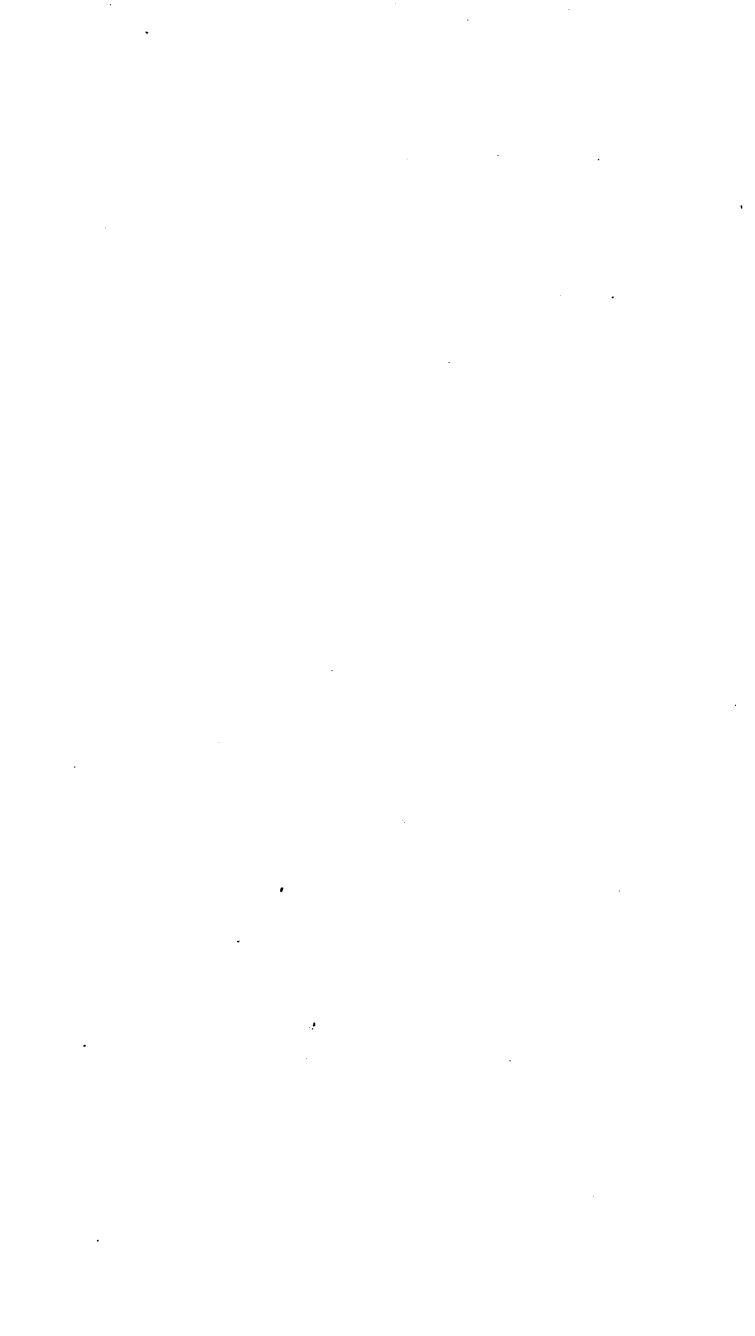
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PREFACE.

THIS volume is intended as a continuation, and in a certain sense as a completion, of two others which have preceded it. In one, Christianity was considered as a Gospel; in another, as an Ideal; and in the present set of Essays it is considered as Thought. It is not, of course, suggested that these are either valid or absolute distinctions; but they form convenient and suitable points of view from which to regard the Christian Religion as it is related to Reason.

P. H. W.

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I.

FAITH AND THE GOSPEL

I.

Faith and the Gospel.

IN considering the nature of faith, we find ourselves in a region where the analogy of natural life fails. For while it is the law of the natural world that the experience, the intelligence, and the character of men develop from stage to stage and increase in power and breadth by slow degrees, the attitude of faith contradicts such a process of gradual development. The nature of faith is not to start from small beginnings and go forward to greater capacity; it is not a gradual and hesitating growth, a constructive principle gaining strength only as it finds its first venture verified and the ground becoming firm beneath it: its nature is rather to grasp the whole of

life at first, to see all things at once in a universal relation, and adopt this final conception as an elementary truth for the beginning. This is recognised by the language we use when we speak of faith as a gift or an inspiration,—the gift of religious faith being as it were the sudden realisation of the completeness of life, its spiritual harmony, its inner unity. And it is from this grasp of the whole, in a spiritual consciousness of its unity, that the history of faith begins; for it becomes the gradual application of this consciousness of the whole to the separate parts and varying forms of life, to all possible conditions and contingencies of experience in the world, until in this reversed development it opens out the relations of the universe as an unfolded unity, the counterpart of a spiritual harmony within. The course of faith, therefore, in relation to life becomes a gradual opening up of its first ideal, as it meets and transcends in the light of this ideal all the exigencies to

which human life is liable; the broadening of it to the unification of life in detail; and even the breaking up of its first simplicity, that by degrees in a deeper and fuller measure it may embrace life, not in the generality of an ideal only, but revealed in the distinction and variety of its relations. We do not, therefore, follow in the history of faith a development from feeble beginnings to fuller trust, from a partial view to a wider scope,—rather we trace out the unfolding of the first complete consciousness of faith through its various applications and possibilities. We are always dealing with the ideal end in the very beginning, though there it may not yet be seen in its fulness; and the progress we make is, as it were, a retrogression in the gradual discovery of all the contents of faith, the fuller interpretation of a single idea, and the recognition of its presence implicitly all along, as an unrealised possibility.

In this we see the latent spirituality of

faith,—that it is infinite, complete, and self-satisfying from the beginning. Though in its earlier phases it may not yet be fully conscious of itself, and may assert its right in crude or extravagant claims, yet, even so, it never goes beyond the range of its first idea, and in the widest of its succeeding applications it has nothing further to gain which was not implicitly present in this idea from the beginning. Its history, whether in the individual man or in the race, is only a growth and a development into consciousness,—the explication of an infinite content, and not the addition of various and different ideas to make it complete. You cannot add power or virtue to your faith from without; for if it need external guidance, it is not yet faith. Faith is not a blind and feeble venture, which by degrees you manage to prop and establish; nor is it the statement of a doubtful proposition, which by degrees you guarantee as more and more complete, and to which you add other and subsidi-

ary propositions as necessity arises. All changes of attitude and all apparent additions to its doctrinal views are but the gradual unfolding of the original contents of faith in the new forms which the inner growth of its idea necessitates.

The nature of faith may be more fully understood from a contrast of its methods with those of science; for faith differs from science in its method just as much as it differs in its matter: indeed it may be said that however evident it seems that faith deals with a different subject, it becomes also no less evident that it deals with its subject in quite a different way. For though science, in one aspect of her work, seems to take up a position which she unconsciously borrows from faith, namely, the conviction of unity in the sphere of nature, the possibility of harmony, and prospect of reconciliation in the diversity of nature's laws; though indeed science cannot hope to make a start till faith has thus shown the way, and would,

left to herself and without faith in the order of the universe, have no clue for discovery or investigation,—yet her method, when this faith is once postulated, becomes one only of verification, as she adds bit to bit in her research, and gradually builds up a growing demonstration of the strength of the hypothesis already furnished by faith. In this the attitude and method of the two are absolutely distinct: for faith in her explanation of the present is not verifying but only revealing her certainty of the end, of that ultimate unity and harmony from reference to which all that is here and present must be fully established, understood, and explained; while the task of science is only that of certifying her hypothesis step by step, investigating her material in the light of views which are restricted and finite, but which are the only conceptions she can bring to the solution of the universe.

It is this contrast of attitude and method that in all discussion should be emphasised

when we speak of the opposition of faith and science; for the supposed opposition of the matter of investigation is by no means so certain. There is more difficulty than at first appears in drawing a hard and fast line of demarcation for the study of the relations which exist between material and spiritual, between events and their laws, between relation and reality. If we decide only according to the subject-matter of faith and science, except in so far as this subject-matter is taken apart for treatment and study in an abstract way, it would be very difficult to define the one in opposition to the other. Especially in sciences like ethics and psychology the relative spheres of investigation for science and faith are hardly to be distinguished, for in both of these the nature and character of the individual Self is at the root of all discussion, and, were it not for the absolute distinction of the method and the attitude of the two in dealing with the problem of self-consciousness, their separ-

ation would be impossible. But in this the position allows of no discussion; for faith finds the sole explanation of any present reality only in its reference and relation to the personal self, the spiritual reality, the permanent unity of self-consciousness as the end from which all the processes of life and mind are being directed; while the whole scope of science is, by analysis and dissection of these processes, to seek for some possible means of combining them.

It is here that philosophy comes closer to faith than to science; for philosophy is at one with faith in the breadth and universality of its view, in its criticism of the abstract methods of science, and in its justification of faith's ideal by thought. The weakness of faith lies in the indeterminate nature of her ideal, and the co-operation of philosophy is needed in strengthening faith's position by the determination of reason; for the supposed antithesis of faith and reason is less than

that of faith and science,—is less indeed an actual difference of sphere than one only of point of view. Thus you cannot hand over to reason certain problems to determine, and reserve certain others for faith to decide: their spheres of investigation are the same, they are concerned with the ultimate unity of the universe, and the task of the one is mainly to justify the other. Faith seizes, as it were by instinct and as an immediate conviction of the heart, the certainty of that ultimate unity which reason can only mediate to itself through thought; but the truth of both conceptions is the same. For religion must finally take up the unity of the whole universe as her creed, and not the unity of one religious faith; and philosophy must acknowledge that the assertions of reason rest in the last resort upon an undemonstrable faith both in Self and in God. There cannot be philosophy without an appeal in the end to faith, and there cannot be an analysis of the truth of faith

without philosophy; for by it alone faith becomes conscious of the thought involved within itself, and perhaps even of its real mission and meaning.

We thus see that the characteristic of faith is something universal in its nature,—an element which grasps at a final unity, an infinite principle which, in the certainty of its conviction and the point of view it has first gained, returns to explain and then take up the finite forms which in an apparently inexplicable variety compose and constitute the whole. It is this universal attitude which already makes faith spiritual and endows it with a possible rationality. In itself it is not fully rational, for it is not fully self-conscious; but it contains in virtue of its instinctive universality an element within it which has the possibility of becoming rational. Even if at first it does not fully comprehend itself, still it is even so far blindly rational, because of the ideal implied in the method it adopts and the view which

it takes of the world as a whole. It is guided by a thought of final unity, and seeks to understand life and the world from such a standpoint: this is essentially rational and spiritual, and contains all the elements of an ultimate reconciliation.

If in such an analysis we seem to admit that faith may be called blind, it is only partially true. It certainly cannot be asserted of faith that it is either a groping endeavour to understand the mystery of life and of the world, or that it is an uncertain venture into the dark regions of doubt and death, guided here at the best by a hope that often threatens to fail. Faith knows nothing of such a spirit of hesitation or fear; and if at all faith may be said to be blind, it is not true of the absolute confidence with which she follows the ideal she has gained. It is true only in so far as faith is unable to verify or justify its attitude and belief, but no further. For, as regards this attitude itself, it is adequately and fully rational,

and is justified by thought as the only true and philosophic standpoint. That faith has been called narrow and prejudiced has arisen from confusing its views with that of individual believers, and has only just sufficient truth to make the statement plausible. Any narrowness of view consists only in that which the intensity of feeling in the conviction of faith's ideal imparts, and which seems from its unconditioned certainty to exclude all argument or reason. This, however, may be termed an incidental characteristic of all religious feeling which emphasises the personal, not the general, aspect of truth, and in no way affects the universal element at the basis of faith's position.

If then, so far, we can be assured that faith is in its nature universal and in its attitude implicitly rational, we have next to consider whether this position is altered or modified by its relation to Christian truth; whether, if it is universal in its method, it is here also universal in its matter.

This question is to be judged and decided by the relation of philosophy to the thought on which the Christian religion lies. And here it is perhaps necessary to point out that the world of philosophy is no abstract unity, formed by casting out all that is real because it is imperfect, excluding all that is actual, individual, and finite, purifying and sublimating our conception of the universe until as a shadow of formless abstraction it seems to be brought nearer to the divine. Such an ideal is but an empty figment of the mind, an unreal glorification of mental formulas, and a bare and lifeless monotony substituted for all the wealth of variety which the universe contains. Far other is the unity which philosophy demands and the ideal to which reason lends her sanction,—a unity which gathers up and reconciles all the varied elements of the universe, which conceives the divine nature as finally enriched and perfected by all the reality it has created, and which sees the true reality of every

form of life only as it is taken up to share in the ideal life to which it tends. And tried by such a standard, referred to such an ideal of philosophy, the universality of the Christian religion not only becomes evident, but is even emphasised in its justification by reason.

And this is so because the goal of the Christian faith is seen to be not an independent, unrelated, or self-identical unity, without sense of variety, or reconciliation, or even struggle for ultimate harmony, but rather a unity which faith fashions out of differences,—a unity which gradually reaches its ideal by overcoming painful contradictions, and finding its work complete in reconciling endless oppositions. We cannot regard a unity which is but the annihilation of such difference as an essential, necessary, or universal ideal, but only as an empty conception of the mind, formed in some abstract process of thought as a standard expression for use in argu-

ment, but devoid of any wider reality. For life and the universe are full of apparent oppositions, which cannot be denied as irrational, or despised as unreal, so long as they can be shown to be reconcilable by faith and not permanent for her as contradictions. Were it possible to seek a unity of the world in the sphere of faith, in order to avoid its explanation or resolution of differences in the sphere of thought, it would be only to assert that religious faith is an empty sentiment or emotion, and does not deal with realities; it would be only to shut our eyes to the necessities of our nature, and find peace by being blind.

But even our earliest and most simple form of religious faith is not one that rejects as unreal the signs of variety and opposition. For while it does not, it is true, either see fully all that is involved in the Christian ideal of unity, or the various contradictions which seem to spring from such an attitude of mind; while faith

does not desire of itself to note or to emphasise any such sense of opposition ; while its nature is rather to reach unity by recognition of the end as present in and overshadowing the beginning, and not to distract itself by the processes or methods of reconciliation : still, even in its simplest forms, such as faith in God's providence or in the love of Christ, it relies not on a unity which is at once apparent and explicit, but on a unity which is reached only in the overcoming of oppositions and contrasts. For indeed the difficulties of reconciliation are at first the prominent feature which Christianity reveals to the soul, and the help and comfort of faith is just their triumphant resolution : so much is this so, and the divergence may be so great, that faith is described as that which makes of twain one new man, so making peace. There is no temptation held out to us, for example, in the Christian religion of striking out or even minimising the reality of sin, or

of pain, or of death: these remain, and indeed become more and more real to the soul of the believer; but they are surmounted by faith, and the final unity of religion reveals them as reconciled in God. This is the essential feature of the unity of Christian faith,—that it is the work of reconciliation, not annihilation: and though the steps of the attainment of this harmony in life may not each be evident to the believer, being gained through the immediacy of feeling and not by thought, yet they are presented as the idea of reconciliation, and form not only an incident in the character of Christian faith, but the very essence and peculiar property of it.

This essential character may be understood by comparing the nature of Christian faith, for example, with the ideal of the Jewish religion. Here the unity which every religion seeks as its ideal is gained entirely from one side: it is not the spontaneous unity of a natural movement,

but a unity forced, as it were, upon the world by the power and intervention of the Deity. That there must be some final unity and harmony is accepted as a necessary ideal of religion even in the Jewish creed; but it is one that is to be brought about only by trusting to the determination of the Deity to maintain his law and overrule all his providence for his own best ends. That God is just and righteous ensures that the regulation of all things will be for the ultimate good of his people; but this good is to be reached not by any attempt at reconciliation from within, but only by the continual assertion from without of the divine power. The adequate unity will be attained, but it will be attained by conflict,—a conflict between the good and evil powers, a conflict in which the kingdom of God will be established by might, a conflict won in vanquishing the ‘nations’ who oppose his rule, and in subduing and destroying the enemies of mankind—that is, sin and pain and death.

That there is no place in the Jewish theodicy for the work of reconciliation is because there is no place for the discipline of pain, for the transformation of sin, or for the mystery of sorrow: it is in the elimination and annihilation of these that the kingdom of God is sought, and it is the destruction of these that is promised. The faith of the Jewish 'kingdom' is faith in the rule and rectifying power of God: that righteousness will prevail, that evil will be destroyed.

It is evident how far such a theory of the universe is from that which is suggested to the mind by the Christian view, for the essence of this lies not in the power of destruction, but in the power of repentance and reconciliation. The Jewish differs chiefly from the Christian view in this total absence of the thought of any inner growth towards the divine kingdom, of any possibility of attaining the appointed end without divine intervention, of any interpretation of present evils in the light

of a future ideal. There is in the religious faith of the Jews nothing which carries out of itself the divine purpose, which has any principle of life or change, any influence which implies renewal. Rather it implies only trust in an external influence acting for good, a power of righteousness regulating the world from without, and a providence more strong than all the powers of darkness. If the word reconciliation can be used at all of the aim or result of such a faith, it is only a reconciliation in name; for it does not in any sense spring from the nature of the world in itself, but is enforced by divine authority as its decree. To the Jew the world is entirely separate from God, as matter is from spirit, and is only dealt with by God as an external and even opposing object. There is no faith in the immanence of God in his world; he is but the Creator and Ruler of the world, who as creator and ruler attains the end he has in view.

At the opposite extreme from this dual-

istic attitude of the Jewish mind may be considered those forms of religious faith in which the idea of a final unity contains nothing that is external to God either as a separate existence or in the opposition of purpose; for all difference and externality are swallowed up in the willing annihilation of separate individuality, and gradual absorption of our personality in the pantheism of matter or of spirit. Here such a self-identical unity of God's nature is based on the persuasion of the unreality of a permanent separate self in men, on the unreality of all present experience, and even the unreality of pain and sin. For these all are regarded in the elevation of religious emotion as having in themselves no true permanence, but only existing as appearances, as emanations and shadows from the one sole and great reality, and which lose their personal identity by being absorbed again by faith into a second unity with the source of all being, and finally renounce whatever show of separate ex-

istence they possessed. Such a complete and all-absorbing unity has probably more fascination for the devout spirit than any other ; as the abandonment of all personal life, of all separate will and purpose, even of all self-conscious being, by absorption of these in the fulness of the divine spirit, seems in moments of devotion to be the height of all spiritual experience, the goal of all religious excellence.

From such an attitude of mind arise the endless forms of false doctrines, generally referred to as the Gnostic heresies ; for in these the continual yearning of religious aspiration and the visions of souls in mystical ecstasies afford temptations to a type of devotion in which all material distinction and personal identity seem to be swept away by the inrush of the divine spirit filling and possessing all. But however attractive such a state of trance and rapture may be as a matter of feeling, yet mysticism of such a kind leaves us only with a dream of religious

unity instead of a spiritual reality: the value of life is lost, for all that is worth saving here or desiring hereafter is despised. True religion cannot wish for a faith which, in the exaggeration of feeling, destroys all personality, even if it destroy at the same time all sin; for such a faith is no solution of the trials and enigmas of life, but only a temptation to deny their existence that they may be avoided. And therefore it is that, wherever the hold on reality is weakened and the facts of life are denied, the history of religion testifies that all such forms of faith are more or less touched with immorality; for the denial of the supremacy of life and the value of self plays havoc with our responsibility and destroys the landmarks between good and evil. If our life is only passed among shadows, we can easily persuade ourselves that we can play with the shadows as we please.

In endeavouring to estimate the value of these two systems of attaining a final

unity for religious faith—both the dualism of the Jewish creed and the pantheism, say, of the Indian mystic—our judgment must be that they fail alike in the true universality of their ideal. In this it is not asserted that they fail to satisfy different types of religious character, but they fail to satisfy thought. For thought cannot rest in an abstract or one-sided view, and both of these are one-sided: for the Jewish faith, with all its machinery of mediation, still leaves the opposition of human and divine unreconciled, while the pantheistic mysticism in the absorption of the creature in the Creator leaves no opposition which demands to be reconciled. The unity of the one contains indeed the elements of difference in its reality, but they are only in the end forced into harmony, and still remain unrelated: the unity of the other has lost all sense of difference and variety in its content, and so becomes an empty and meaningless combination. It may be said that the

Jewish faith never got the length of the idea of reconciliation, and that pantheism passed beyond it. The ideal of Jesus, on the other hand, remains universal in a true sense, because it is spiritual enough to overcome the natural tendency toward both of these extremes, and in the doctrine of Reconciliation to find a true harmony of human and divine; in which faith, emphasising without fear the essential nature of each, transcends their apparent opposition, and satisfies at once both heart and mind.

It can scarcely be too frequently repeated that this conception of the religious unity of faith, as a spiritual Reconciliation, was the ideal of the teaching of Jesus. But the exaggeration to which this ideal was subjected in the later forms of Christian asceticism and monasticism in the history of the Church, shows that to many religious souls it seemed not to be absolute enough, —seemed too much like a compromise, in which sin and imperfection still remained

though transformed. The complete effacement and abolition of whatever had come between man and God is what many felt to be the only possible ground of peace and harmony. It seems indeed as though it were impossible for the religious spirit to rest satisfied short of some form of ascetic doctrine; but the ideal of Jesus was not this. To him reconciliation was the highest bond of religious unity conceivable; to him both God and man represented too much reality for either to be set aside, in order to allow the religious life to become a compromise, or a superstition, or to be idealised out of all recognition by renunciation of the true nature of man. For humanity to him was as much an ideal as was God. Humanity, it is true, was not to him the beginning and end of faith, the limit of worship and devotion, the sole idea in religion and in progress: but, though God was the first thought from which his faith in man was deduced, yet human life and the world had for him a value

that was not fictitious or merely dependent, but a value of their own, inherent and inalienable. In this practical attitude of faith, in the acknowledgment of the reality of all human experience, in the conviction of the spirituality of all phases of life, his religion contradicted the docetic speculations of philosophy and the unreal assumptions of mysticism. With him religion held fast to all the actualities of earth, found revelation in experience, and sacraments in providence; and, in recognising the value of human life and its conditions, became a sane and rational principle of guidance. He need not deny man to reach God, or despise the earth to gain heaven. The religion of Jesus could not abandon the reality of the world of man, or regard his life as an object only of divine pity. It was no mere Gospel of compassion, but an appeal in the name of love to the heart of man, to turn from unreal aims and to be satisfied with this world of God; an appeal which he alone can enforce who sees God

more in the daily life of man than in the exalted trance of mysticism, to whom this is the only mysticism his religion acknowledges—that which sees God in man, the ideal man in the real. For if once that which to us is real be set, not in harmony with, but in opposition to, the ideal, or if humanity be treated as unworthy and incapable in the presence of Deity, then nothing can restore a reconciliation: the real and ideal once sundered, cannot again receive any fanciful reconstruction for a religious faith, or bring support to man in the vicissitudes of life as a reliable source of thought or belief. We cannot build our religion in the air, but only on the solid rock of human experience; for all that concerns us religiously must concern us also practically.

Nor did this intense faith in the true place of human nature and in the necessity of taking up the reality of things as we know them on the earth into religion, hesitate or waver on the brink of the

gulf to which it led, for there was also present to the faith of Jesus the actual spiritual possibility of even the worst human conditions. It was here that the religion of Jesus was called upon first to attempt in practical conditions the reconciliation which it preached as universal and possible in the eternal constitution of things. And the spirit of Jesus was equal to the test: he accepted life as it was; to him the reconciliation was already implicit in every form of life, for the ideal lay hid in the real. The union of the ideal with all the struggling confusion of the real, the undying presence of the ideal in the moving mass of humanity, was Christ's faith, and Christ's truth. Life was not only real, but life was a spiritual reality, capable of asserting itself under all conditions, and of triumphing over all hindrances; indeed to him the essential reality of all things was just this ideal capability. The sin, the pain, the death in the world were not so much

the actual reality in themselves, but rather the necessary conditions and limitations, the weakness and contradiction, under which alone the true reality could appear. The final reality lay in the unending possibility of the spiritual nature of the world; in the unwearied aspiration of life behind these conditions in which it had here to disclose itself. In the religion of Jesus, therefore, the attainment of unity was no mere negative process, no process of elimination or destruction, but the gradual supremacy of the rational and spiritual element in the universe, slowly ascending to its true position, not by refusing its temporary surroundings, not by denying man's shortcomings and sins, but by the acceptance of these and their transformation, so that God should be all in all.

The idea of reconciliation, therefore, is not to be described, or if not openly described yet secretly suspected, as merely making the best of a bad bargain, the attempted rectification of a bad state of

things, the device of Providence for righting what had gone wrong: it is rather to be conceived of as the only possible realisation of a permanent and spiritual unity for the world, and therefore the only basis of a permanent and spiritual religion. Any other view of life begins or ends with an unapproachable dualism, — the separation of God and the world to begin with, or the undying contradiction of good and evil at the end. For such a view the religion of Jesus seems but the expression of some sudden intervention to save the world from strife and from the possibility of destruction; its affirmation of peace is but an attempt to overcome the negation of it on the earth; and its doctrine of reconciliation is a tardy method of reconstruction. But we have not so learned Christ. His faith is faith in the slow development of the universe, ever with good working out through evil, and the eternal possibilities of God's purpose becoming clearer, until this view of

the reconciliation of all will at last be revealed as the one supreme thought of God. For there is no religious unity possible which cannot take up and utilise the whole of life. No idea of unity can be satisfying which either leaves anything outside of itself, or deliberately destroys what it cannot mend : the only truth which can create or defend a universal religion is one which offers a complete and perfect realisation of all that the world contains ; and it is the doctrine of reconciliation alone which affords this. Reconciliation, therefore, is no mere halfway house in the progress of religion, no afterthought of the divine Providence, no makeshift for the religious consciousness, but the highest and ultimate conception of a religion which seeks in its ideal to take up into an abiding harmony both human and divine, both time and eternity, both sin and holiness, both life and death. The two elements, however they may be expressed, apparently so contradictory and so opposed,

must still be found to have something in common in the nature of each ; their contradictions must be regarded partly at least as imperfections ; and an ideal which is seen thwarted in either apart must be found realised in a higher unity of both.

But if the doctrine of reconciliation be the highest statement of the religious unity for Christianity, and the teaching of Jesus, based on this idea, afford a complete universality for faith ; it may be asked, Can we still find any higher form of unity, more pure or more simple, in the personality and consciousness of Jesus himself ? The sphere of the consciousness of Jesus is a realm so calm and undisturbed that theological attempts have often been made to demonstrate some higher consciousness there than that which can be described as a reconciliation, which a timid faith deems inconsistent with a real and actual unity of human and divine. Such a process of refinement in treating

of this union has been attempted on the one hand by diminishing the common attributes of his humanity, or on the other hand by separating and exalting those of his divinity: in this way the divine element is supposed to be freed from contamination and exalted above conscious sense of limit. But the very contrary may be said rather to be the case: for that spirit cannot be truly divine which finds anything in the world alien to itself, which is compelled to preserve its infinite nature by excluding the finite from its content, or which can regard its purpose in the universe as fulfilled while still there is anything beyond its power to reconcile. And those who are of so little faith that they cannot see in divinity a spirit which becomes unreal when separated and secluded in an empty realm, or that it cannot be true to its own nature till it takes up humanity as an essential element of its being, cannot, on the other hand, see that it is just in the assertion of this interde-

pendence and mutual relation of human and divine that Christianity stands alone, and declares to men an ultimate truth, both for religion and for reason. To attempt to minimise or destroy the spontaneous balance of this harmony in the consciousness of Jesus is to attack Christianity at the very root. It cannot, therefore, do good, but only harm, to continue the assertion of old theological ideas which attempted in a mechanical way, and with imperfect categories of thought, to lessen the supposed contradiction in the dualistic consciousness of Christ, and to try to save the divine element at the expense of the human. The consciousness of Jesus was the highest form, the unique example, of that reconciliation of human and divine, in which lay the ideal he strove to express in his own teaching. His consciousness knew nothing of the denial or separation of either from the other, nothing of the loss of the one for the other, but only the final and infinite realisation of both,

and the implied truth that one cannot be perfect apart from the other.

In theological literature such a position of stable equilibrium is seldom reached; and even in an able and eloquent book (*The Christ of History and of Experience*: Rev. Dr D. W. Forrest), devoted chiefly if not entirely to a discussion on the nature of the consciousness of Jesus, we find an attempt of this mechanical kind still is made. For while we have it stated, as indeed is absolutely essential both for religion and morality, that 'moral qualities are the same' between us and God, yet it is asserted that 'our moral personality is different.' This difference is emphasised with reference to Christ by such other expressions as 'a separate moral type,' 'a new factor' in his nature, a superiority which is 'one of kind.' But it may be replied to these assertions of dualism, first, that all analogy of our experience leads us to the belief that, where human sympathy and love can so far realise a union of two

individual souls in the completion, not the limitation, of each other, the divine Spirit may also thus realise itself even to perfection ; that if there be such an absolute distinction of natures as to make any natural fusion of human and divine impossible, there seems to be no third term available as a necessary means of determining its extent and character ; and that, if moral qualities are the same for human and divine but moral personality different, there must be abandoned any common standard of moral life between the two, for this is possible only where the personality is at least of the same kind, though finite in its nature, and though varying both in extent of knowledge and capacity. Such teaching as this still represents absolute dualism, for moral personality is only known by its relation to moral qualities : a personality, either human or divine, is inconceivable apart from actual qualities ; and there cannot be a metaphysical distinction to separate the contents of the

personality from the living personality itself. Such a separation is merely a psychological fiction.

In all these phrases we trace not only the lingering imperfections of an old terminology, but also the fear that is latent in theology of touching reality,—of coming into contact with one of the essential aspects of divinity, namely, humanity. We may go further and say that, if psychological limitations of such a kind are insisted on, then the humanity of Jesus is not a true humanity. For human nature cannot remain the same if altered even in any one particular. It is not an artificial combination from which you can subtract elements and attributes at will; it is an organic unity, possible only as it is in itself: it is either human nature entirely, or not human nature at all. So also it may be said of the Divine consciousness: it cannot abnegate its functions, or deprive itself of its own attributes; if it can do so, it is no longer divine. The Divine nature

does not consist of a set of attributes which can be increased, or diminished, or manipulated at the divine will: it is either wholly divine, or not divine; there is no middle course. It is impossible, therefore, that any such truncated theology, or mechanically planned unity, can ever form a permanent ideal for religion; and, indeed, the religious consciousness has always ignored it, and found for itself that Jesus was most divine wherever he was most human.

II.

FAITH AND THEOLOGY

II.

Faith and Theology.

THE passage from the simplicity of the Gospel faith to the reasoned truth of Christianity may be represented in one view as a historical necessity. For faith is an appreciation of the truth, not specially or exclusively by the reason but rather by the moral nature of man—that is, by man as a moral being, in his whole relations to life. It is the response he makes from heart, and will, and character, to the appeal of some truth which comes home to him as a moral being: whether it be the appeal of love and sympathy to one lost and desolate in the vast isolation of the world; or the appeal of censure and command realised and acquiesced in by a con-

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sciousness burdened with sin ; or the appeal of an ideal to a human soul that is ever aspiring beyond itself and 'restless till it find rest in God.' Whatever form the appeal of truth may take, faith represents the response of man in his moral character, touched and swayed by emotion and desire. And, judged by such a standard as this, we have no difficulty in discerning that the early faith of the disciples was chiefly characterised by the presence of personal feeling and devotion ; it was something 'inward' and peculiar to themselves ; the product perhaps more of personal contact with the object of their faith than any definite grasp of truth.

In one sense this inward conviction of faith is the power that overcometh the world ; for wherever the strength of individual feeling and personal loyalty to a cause is required, there faith triumphs over all, no man counting his life dear unto himself, if only he may finish his course with joy. But in another sense, in that

aspect of faith in which one desires not so much the victory of a single side of truth such as is usually the source of strong personal conviction, but rather the widening growth and expansion through its own natural force of the seed of truth originally sown, then the faith of disciples and followers may indeed become so personal that its very intensity may vitiate its power; for the stronger any feeling is, the more is it limited in its scope, narrower in its aim, and even exclusive of all guidance. There is no common ground in feeling: every man is his own standard, every man forms his own school. Feeling has no common language; it cannot be expressed; it remains a mystery, a vision, impossible and unlawful to utter. You cannot go forth to preach your feelings, however clear they are to yourself: they are your own, and there is no common standard by which they can be conveyed and represented to others. Simple religious faith may, indeed, even as a feeling, be implicitly universal;

but it cannot become really and permanently universal as simple faith: its simplicity as feeling must be broken up in order to discover its universality as religion. It must receive some form of statement in which others can comprehend and enjoy its permanent truth.

This was the first historical necessity for the passage of the simplicity of faith into the formulas and doctrines of theology. For the teaching of Jesus was not intended by him to remain the mystical possession of a few followers, but the practical and actual possession of all men as a reliable truth, recorded in historical statement for the regulation of life and the attainment of peace. The disciples were taught, that they might go and teach; and the promise of a universal religious kingdom was to be the ideal of their teaching. Such an errand was in the first days easily fulfilled, while the personality of Jesus was their inspiration and the longing tribes of Israel their audience, for the coming of Messiah and

the nearness of the Kingdom were in all men's minds. But gradually, as the personality of the Master receded and the character of the audience changed, these simple messages were insufficient, and a statement, therefore, of the truth of Jesus was needed,—some definite Gospel teaching which would appeal to others than contemporary Jews, if not for discussion and verification, at least for acceptance and belief. The feelings of faith had to be put into the common language of men, be translated into conceptions which the minds of men could lay hold of, and so become gradually the inheritance of the race. The early faith as it was suited for the comprehension of the disciples had to become what theological study considered the truth universal in Jesus. On such conditions alone could earnest disciples become powerful apostles: so only could there be any mission to the world in the name of Jesus.

But, besides this external or historical necessity, there was also implied an inner

or philosophical necessity for such a transition. For the growth of doctrine from the first simple form of faith is seen to be a natural one, a process of development essential for its protection, if the faith is to be permanent. It is impossible that such a growth of doctrine should be represented as a degeneration or falling away from the original purity of faith ; for this is to mistake the first argument of truth for its final one, the source of religion for its ideal, and the origin of faith for its validity. The simplicity of faith is not to be sought by retracing again the steps through which it has advanced and by casting all development of doctrine aside from the bare form in which it first appeared ; for we can conceive that faith may return again to a fuller and purer simplicity when the work of theology is done.

In one aspect simple faith is not wholly true, because it has not realised its own truth, and because its simplicity is only one of uninquiring trust. Otherwise, it

may be said that it is only implicitly true—that is, it is true for feeling only ; true as a claim of the heart ; able to satisfy life in its own way. This is the first attitude of the mind of man towards religion, but it does not represent his final faith : it cannot be permanent, for it is not yet self-conscious. Man acts first under the influence of emotion ; but he reflects afterwards on the nature of his emotions and the meaning of his acts. And as no act in the world of experience can be rightly called a man's own until it is so realised in reflection, so no act of religious faith can be said to be fully or adequately true until its meaning is comprehended in consciousness, and it has been gathered in, with all other forms of man's life, under the discipline of knowledge and reason. This tendency to reflection on all his states of feeling and all the actions they produce is a characteristic feature of man's social and political development, and we cannot believe development possible in his re-

ligious life until it also comes under a similar discipline. It is true that in advancing thus to the stage of religious reflection we may seem to be leaving the time of primitive faith, and to be bartering the peace of simple and uninquiring trust for a faith which has become contaminated with an alien element, by the intrusion of thought and reason. But this is only for a time; and faith returns again to a higher unity, because a conscious unity, from its temporary submission to the claims and criticism of reason.

Primitive faith is also not wholly true, because it is unrelated to anything beyond itself, because it occupies an isolated place in life, and dwells in a world apart. But faith cannot reach its full development in isolation, or attain its ultimate truth by self-contemplation in a world of its own. Its meaning and its scope are unknown until its relation with all else is presupposed, and through some universal bond its character is revealed. It is only as it

finds itself to be an integral part of the whole universe of God that the truth of its message is realised, as it has been enriched by contact with ever-increasing surroundings. Faith dare not remain a thing apart, for there is no room in the world for anything with a special and exclusive claim of its own : there is no kingdom where faith can reign by contradicting or despising the rest of life. Religious faith must be no mere negation of the world : if it is to fulfil its purpose it must be faith not in one thing, but in all ; for if faith cannot resolve the universe it cannot resolve anything. All the problems of life are universal, even as is the problem of the hyssop that springeth out of the wall ; and no religious faith can approach or resolve them which does not also take account of the whole universe. It is in this parallelism of life and the world that the need for the rationality of faith, the solution of the universal in the particular, the recognition of one law throughout the

whole, is irrevocably demanded. For a faith which is apart from reason is superstition; and a faith which sees only one application of truth is bigotry. The passage, therefore, from an uninquiring faith to a rationalised faith is not only a defensible transition, but for the development of religion can be shown to be a necessary one. When we enter on the age of doctrine we are not entering on a path of decline from a better and brighter state, but rather are we taking the first step into the full liberty of a reasoned and self-conscious faith, though it is inevitable that the first step to true liberty may seem bondage.

Sometimes we find this theological relation of faith to reason frankly acknowledged, but in a form which leaves the acknowledgment destitute of real meaning. We can scarcely be wrong in saying that this seems to be the attitude, for instance, of Principal Fairbairn, in his book on *The Philosophy of Christianity*, in which, among other equally strong and emphatic

things, he says, 'It does not lie in the power of any man or any society to keep the mysteries of faith out of the hands of reason.' And no words could more accurately define the position. But the 'reason' here referred to is found on examination not to be the free speculative reason of man known as 'philosophy,' but a Biblical philosophy ready made, in which the writer is able to include such a definite external creation of the universe in time, by an external Deity, and such a multiplicity of plans present to his mind for 'selection,' that the Creator was 'faced by a grave problem' when he 'made the universe'; that he also appointed 'providence to follow on creation,' and did not prevent the origin of evil in order that he might 'deal directly with the evil when it had become.' Now, however willing Christian apologetics may be to accept such prolegomena to its science, it cannot be said that they conform to the demands of reason, or that it can be of much value

to an inquiring mind to submit our Christian faith to the criticism of a philosophy which involves all this. If it is considered somewhat a bold challenge to refuse to keep our primitive faith 'out of the hands of reason,' it will probably not matter much for good or evil whether we keep it out of the hands of a reason which is so saturated already with the very elements of all primitive faiths. Again, in such phrases as 'faith is intellectual, involves thought'; 'there cannot be religion without knowledge'; 'not to think were not to believe,'—Principal Fairbairn states what he considers to be a proof of the broad principle that there is no permanent opposition between faith and reason. But what in reality he proves is only by a psychological analysis of the state of mind called 'faith,' that it is, or may be, distinguished from any other state of mind, say, hope or charity. But such an analysis of the contents of any state of consciousness seems to leave things just as they

were; for it does not prove faith to be related to speculative or universal reason—that is, to have its roots in some truth which can be shown to be a necessity of thought as well as a claim of religion. Such an analysis is merely like a dissolving chemical process, separating out the various constituent elements in any state of thought or feeling; but in proposing this as a proof that faith is in the hands of reason he mistakes the analytic function of psychology for that of a rational verification by philosophy. The faith of which Principal Fairbairn here speaks is simply the analysed mental process involved in the statement ‘I believe,’ but not at all the consciousness which is commensurate with the life of a religious soul. Much less can such proof be made to mean that what we believe in Christianity has any necessary relation to thought, or that the object of our religious faith must in the end prove to be rational, and not merely mystical. Again, when he says ‘Plato would have

given us no philosophy without the motive and material which religion supplied,' he is once more moving on the psychological path. For though in a broad and general way it may be said that man is religious before he is philosophic, that he believes before he thinks, it is impossible from such a generalisation to deduce the alternative, that without religion there would be no philosophy. For this is again but analysing and dividing into abstract entities two sides of man's nature which, except for the object of special study, cannot be sundered or exist apart. The spiritual consciousness of man is in reality the rational consciousness of man; he is spiritual because he is rational. The original 'motive and material' of religion cannot be separated by itself—it is the same as that of philosophy: religion is but thought as yet blind and unmethodised; but there is no absolute priority either of the one or of the other.

There is in this question of the rationality of faith no psychological *via media*.

Where we are met by the apparent opposition of the two realms of faith and reason, the only consistent attitude of mind is either to regard the objects and the acts of the religious spirit as essentially, though not yet explicitly, rational; or to regard faith and reason as occupying two distinct and irreconcilable spheres in life. This latter view is expressed in the oft-repeated statement that it is the very characteristic of faith to deal with matters beyond the scope and province of reason; that the gift of faith has been bestowed upon us just to fulfil those functions which reason cannot perform, and to grant us insight into subjects where thought unaided cannot penetrate. And such a view, however extreme its position may be, is of course both traditional and intelligible; nevertheless, when stated as an apology for religion and brought forward in support of its exclusive claim, it seems to be open to overwhelming objections. For, without going beyond its most obvious applications, we find the

following conclusions must be drawn: for example, that there is an irreconcilable dualism in the constitution of the universe, that religious faith is in its nature irrational or non-rational, that there are elements in the world which it is beyond the power of thought to grasp, that we have in religion to believe what is already postulated as unknowable, and that revelation is required in order to put into our minds what our minds are stated to be incapable of receiving.

In recoiling from conclusions such as these, and steadfastly seeking some possible harmony, we are forced to find the only tolerable view of the relation of faith to reason in that which the rise of theology implies. For the entrance of dogma into the history of religion is not merely an attempt to state clearly the matters of faith, but is also the token of the submission of faith, not indeed to be dictated to, but to be justified by, reason. The growth of dogma is the free response which

religious faith makes to the demands of reason. In making this response, Christian dogma undertakes not only to preserve and consolidate historic facts, but to demonstrate the truth of these facts to be universal, the common possession of mankind, accessible to ordinary thought, and not the creed of a caste. Christianity has no esoteric 'mysteries' in any superstitious or irrational sense; no truth for the initiated only, though the initiated have often claimed it. Her theology is the rational appeal of the Christian religion to the mind of man; the open declaration that the Church bases her truth on world-facts, and on the statement of them which she believes to be conformable to reason: it is her pledge that she will propagate the faith in forms intelligible to all.

Of course, it is another question how far the history of dogma, as we have it in the Church, fulfils such an ideal; whether it is either an adequate or a permanent treatment of the faith; whether the methods

at the disposal of the Church allowed it to be carried out in the fullest way; and whether the results are to be accepted entire, as all equally valuable for the Christian religion. It is fair that such questions should be asked, for the actual historical development of doctrine need not be confused with the aim which prompted its undertaking, nor need the results obtained in the movement be made the standard of its original necessity. All that we have to note and observe is the relation of such a movement to the nature of our religious faith as a necessary attempt to find for faith a true place in the history of thought. It is in intention at least a movement of reason, an acknowledgment of the right of reason in the realm of faith. That there was a deliberate intention, or even a fully conscious movement, toward reason need not be maintained; for it is not only probable, but demonstrably certain, that the development of doctrine was influenced in its course as well by external

conditions and the exigencies of the times as by a purely intellectual motive. Theology bears a strictly historical character, and was swayed and moved in its progress by ever-varying demands, such as the need of the Church to face new schools of interpretation within, or to preach the faith to new races of men without,—the need now to accept the thought of the Greeks, or now to condemn the morals of the Barbarians. But these issues were only accidents of the historical process, and such influences as must affect all human development, while the rational impulse of the whole movement remained steadfast beneath all change.

But while we are far from depreciating the extent of historical influences, we are more concerned here with the fact that the theology of the Church was moulded not only by these outer contingencies, arising from the circumstances of the times, but much more took its shape from the inner nature of the subject to be affirmed. This

influence continued always more powerful in the formation of theological thought than any external or temporary accidents. For the Gospel idea of reconciliation, when treated not as the object of faith in a spiritual life, but by theology from the point of view of abstract reason, required for its rational interpretation a new attitude of mind altogether. The schools of thought provided no logical categories for Gospel truth, no formulas adequate to meet the apparent contradictions of a spiritual character, no dialectic to express the union of human and divine such as was involved in the reconciliation by faith of elements regarded as inherently opposed. The chief category indeed in use as an instrument of logical analysis was just the denial of such a proposition. For the law of contradiction was the high-water mark already attained of clear thinking and logical argument; and unless such a position, namely, that a spiritual relation could not be expressed by opposite attributes, was to

be abandoned, there seemed no room for the admission of the new conception, that divine might be also human, that death might conceivably be life. For such expressions as these cannot be treated merely as metaphors: they are of the essence of spiritual truth, and relate to experiences as real as any in the material world. Even in lesser forms this spiritual contradiction continually recurred, and in every explanation of Gospel truth the same difficulty appeared—where, for example, it had to be maintained that God could be both just and merciful, that enemies could be treated as friends, that sin could be righted by forgiveness, and that he who would be master must serve. In the statement of these and of similar contradictions it was found that the ordinary rules and categories of thought could scarcely be applied except by breaking with all allegiance to the well-known principles of dialectic and the accepted rules of logic.

Nor can we wonder that in such circum-

stances a forced application of logical and formal reasoning was justified in the theology of these Aristotelian days, when we still find in our own days, and under broader conceptions both of logic and religion, that theologians press into use for the explanation of religious ideas categories of thought which belong exclusively to one sphere for purposes of argument in another. That this is the case may especially be exemplified in the custom of elucidating and translating spiritual ideas by material examples. An instance may be found in the use made of the category of causality which, from an entirely material sphere, is introduced, with reference to the discussion on the freedom of the will, into a sphere where the material conditions are entirely absent; until in the end the continual use of metaphors, like the 'impact of billiard balls,' taken from the action of natural objects, produces a series of illustrations which by degrees cease to be illustrations and harden into arguments.

The problem of thought which the Church had to face in the construction of a theology was of course no ordinary one; for Christianity introduced not only new facts into the world—which might have been easily stated, preserved, and correlated with old—but new ideas as well, within the facts. The central truth of Christianity; for instance,—the Incarnation,—was not merely a new fact but a new idea; and the new idea which it contained was the spiritual necessity of finding for the apparently irreconcilable differences of human and divine a higher unity—the idea that faith could rise to a point of view in which it was possible to see them reconciled; the idea that the old opposition of these thoughts in the Jewish faith did not necessarily mean their absolute contradiction; and that such seeming contradictions were truly overcome in the life of Spirit, though they were still insoluble as contradictions to logic and abstract thought. For it may certainly be said that the solu-

tion of this idea of the Christian religion was intended to be sought in the spiritual Character, not, as theology demanded, in the logical mind; and that faith naturally found the means of reconciliation in the one which were absolutely wanting to theology in the other. It was in this new idea there was introduced into the Christian religion the true conception of Spirit; which, in its power of revealing a nature capable of developing change, yet of transcending the difference in reconciling opposition, was to be the supreme law of Christian thought, and for which the old categories of formal reasoning and of the logical understanding had to be exchanged.

Such new ideas, of an all-creative and an all-embracing Spirit, faith was able to accept without difficulty in the new life of a new religious atmosphere; but they were stumbling-blocks to the formal processes of theology, which alone were permissible in the schools of the Church, as in the schools of dialectic. Doubtless at the time the

different scope of faith and theology was scarcely recognised, and the difficulty naturally of any collision between the two was not yet felt; for the Christian ideas were treated by theology as was then only possible. The question, however, of the larger issue,—the question of the relation of faith and reason,—was then unconsciously raised, and was then incapable of receiving a full reply. In later ages it consciously arose, and now arises again: Must the Aristotelian categories of thought and the laws of formal reasoning be abandoned, to make way once more for the claims of a simple uninquiring faith? Must the ultimate reconciliation of religion be left one-sided, for faith alone, excluding the voice and sphere of reason? Must the demand to verify the position of faith be refused? and the right denied to compare the laws of the spiritual realm with the laws of the rational as the mind of man has constituted them? Or the question may be raised in its modern form: If we are to speak of a Phil-

osophy of Christianity, is it a free speculative verification of the position of Christianity? or may it already presuppose the tenets of Biblical revelation as a valid foundation of critical and rational methods?

Such a position may be met in two ways. The theology of the early Church met it unhesitatingly on the side of reason, by the use of the categories of thought at the time available and common in the schools of philosophy. But if this attitude of theology was right,—right in the instinctive assumption that faith must be reasonable, that Christian thought must be universal and in harmony with the constitution of things,—yet at the same time it solved the dilemma by withdrawing all Christian truth from the reality of daily life, from the movement of human character, in relation to which alone it could be properly estimated, and by gathering all questions of faith into a region where they could be examined and considered simply as propositions of the in-

tellect. For in the view of theologians the contents of the Christian faith, treated not as realities of life and not in their relation to individual human beings, lost nothing, but rather gained, in being successfully arranged as problems of pure thought and in the most abstract formulas of the mind. Nor probably could the evil of such a course have been avoided; for it was only by the substitution of abstract thoughts for living characters, calling into existence logical propositions for religious truths, and exchanging emotions of the heart for ideas which had reality only in the mind, that the exigencies of the school-philosophy could be satisfied and the reasonableness of the religion be established.

The truths of Christianity were not tampered with or manipulated except in so far as they were removed from one sphere of thought to another—from the actualities of life to the dialectic of the schools, from the freedom of spirit to the formality of logic. This transference of the

truths of Christianity for dissection, as it were, in the class-room was believed to make no difference in their meaning; indeed such a transference from their relation to life was regarded as the first essential step for their calm and intelligent study. But the class-room specimen is never any more the living object, for all its natural character and claim to truth are gone with the loss of its own conditions of life. Anything living, which is even for a time isolated from its surroundings, ceases to be the same living creature, ceases to act or react according to the same laws; for life can show its truth only in its natural environment. In the end, every creature belongs to the whole universe: and it cannot be truly known apart from the universe in which it lives; its character, its meaning, its self-justification are altered and tampered with when it is artificially isolated for study. It was in this way and to this extent, invisible indeed to the Christian scholastics, but to

us now portentous in its results, that the truth of Christianity was tampered with: by the alteration of its surroundings, by its isolation for thought alone, and by its abstract definition under conditions which were entirely alien to its nature and intention.

The subject was too spiritual for the method; and we have therefore found, in a time of fuller comprehension of spiritual truth, that the reconciliation which was sought by religious faith could never be got to rise spontaneously as an inference from logical premises. The reconciliation which was possible to the spirit in actual contact with life withered up in the dark and cold analysis of the study; and the free action of the faith of man, in accepting and meeting the demands of religion, became paralysed and immovable when confronted with these demands in an abstract and isolated form. What faith could do for man in life, could not be done under such conditions of abstract thought; the ap-

parent contradictions, surmounted and subdued in the religious character, hardened there into real opposition. What elsewhere was tractable, could not there be reconciled; and though the ground of a natural harmony had been gained in faith, it seemed lost to reason.

The harmony was, of course, in one sense gained, and theology triumphed over all difficulties in the expression of the faith in such a way as to compel the admiration of ages, and to fascinate even minds devoted to the study of speculative thought; for the Christian theology is monumental in its intrepid construction on an unrivalled system of religious belief. But the theological harmony was not adequate. It was not able either to express the spirituality of the contents of the Christian truth, or to meet permanently the demands of faith, deep in the general heart of man. It proved to be but a phase in the development of the Christian religion,—a phase necessary and also permanent in

its intention, but temporary and passing in its form; for it was a position which, though occupied in the name of reason, was only the preparation for another, one point of view whose truth in time must give way to a higher. For when theology fell from its high estate and began to lose its hold on the awakening consciousness of modern times, another attitude of the philosophic mind was found possible toward the Christian truth; another logic, as faithful to the demands of reason,—one which could recognise the reconciliation of religion to be organic and spontaneous; and its harmony, based on laws of natural growth, universal and acceptable at once for faith and for thought.

In the meantime, all that was reached was an artificial and external reconciliation between God and man, between man and the universe. For though there lay in Christianity a spirit which in the natural conditions of a religious life would have brought about its own solution of all con-

traditions,—a spirit which, by a spontaneous adaptation of itself to these conditions, would have made that solution not only possible but permanent,—yet in abstract and isolated thought it could only produce a solution which was forced by a process of mechanical logic, and was even contradictory in its meaning to the tendency of the original teaching. The idea, for instance, of Fatherhood, as Jesus understood it of the nature of God, would, in what may be termed its natural conditions,—that is, in the mind of Jesus and as he himself realised it,—have brought forth in complete accord and reconciliation all those elements of a spiritual faith which in his religion were attributed to it—namely, the necessity of holiness, justice, mercy, self-sacrifice, and other such divine attributes; unless, indeed, the Deity has a ‘different moral personality’ from our own.

But when these various attributes were separated from the reality of a Father’s nature, and made the subject of an isolated

study, they were found to be incompatible and contradictory. Love, justice, and mercy were, as ideas in the abstract, irreconcilable; and no theology could find in them a natural tendency to harmony and reconciliation. The definition of each conflicted with the other, and it was only by introducing secondary and supplementary ideas that they could be forced to work harmoniously together. Hence came the involved theological relations between them, and the necessity for new definitions and arrangements to satisfy justice at the expense of mercy, and to allow the Deity to forego his own natural character in order that the exactions of abstract thought might be maintained. Everyday life, which after all has a cogent reason and logic of its own, afforded continually the proof and verification of the things of faith in this connection; but the supposed demands of speculative reason could rest with nothing short of a demonstration under conditions which denied and destroyed all its spiritual

meaning. The letter of theology seemed to kill that life in religion which the spirit gave.

This was the first attempt to elucidate and rationalise the contents of faith, and it almost necessarily took up an attitude of abstract speculation, which of course proved an attitude antagonistic to all that was classed as natural. But however true it is that reason is a universal standard, it is only true in so far as reason takes life along with it, and does not make its judgment from a point of view which regards religion under abstract and therefore unreal conditions. It was thus that faith lost that universal relation which in her earliest form she possessed, and which alone was her claim to a rational and philosophic treatment. For the opening up and development of the latent truth of faith began in a one-sided attempt to explain its rationality, as consisting in deductions of pure thought and unreal isolation from the world of life. This was the view of its

rationality which for ages almost excluded faith from religion altogether, and by degrees put in its place merely an intellectual approval of certain arrangements devised by reason to explain the relation of God to the world. That the acceptance of these arrangements involved, under the name of faith, an intellectual belief in certain propositions did not at all restore the universal ideal of Love with which Jesus had saturated his religious teaching. But the first step forward from the unconscious to the conscious appreciation of truth must issue in conflict and apparent contradiction, until, after passing under different aspects, the whole truth of faith is at last recognised by thought in its universality.

This imperfect, because abstract, mediation of the truth of Christianity through thought received, or more probably largely produced, its historical counterpart in the mediation of it to the world through the Church. Naturally, in the theological

analysis of the reconciliation of religion, emphasis was laid entirely on the divine side as being for reason most remote from and unaffected by the ordinary conditions of life. And as the mediation of Jesus, in whom the human and divine had come together, was the sole ground of such a possibility, so in its actual presentation to men the mediation of the Church became the sole ground and possibility of the people's faith. As on the speculative side the union of opposing elements in the faith was external and mechanical,—for the divine was conceived as so opposed to the human as to be incapable of union with it except through some interposing medium,—so also the same gulf between human and divine in actual historical intercourse had to be mediated by an external agency, and that agency was the Church. The Church thus became the counterpart of the great Mediator, the visible union of the two natures, the only reconciliation of human and divine. However artificial

such a union might be, yet this historical presentation of it in the Church became the sole means of intercourse between God and his people. The Church became the living body of Christ, the object of the people's faith, and the creed of their religion, completely externalised and objectified; so that faith in Jesus was indirectly by the action of theology transferred to faith in the Church.

In this attitude of theological reason, in which speculation ignored the claims of life and withdrew to realms of empty thought, the one side of the reconciliation was naturally pressed to the extreme,—the divine was emphasised to the exclusion of the human. This opposition was magnified by an unreal process of abstraction, till mediation became forced and artificial, and the divine and human had nothing in common save the mechanical link between them. Hence arose the characteristic thought of the Middle Ages—the separation of the Church and the World, the

sacred and the profane, the clergy and the people. So that it was only by slow degrees that we find the mind of the Church turning to the problem of humanity, and taking up for consideration that element in the idea of reconciliation. For many ages the thought of the Church was concerned only with the definition of the nature and functions of the Divine: Theology and Christology were the only subjects which entered into the development of doctrine. By the time that these had been fully defined, the life of Humanity took its place in the history of dogma.

III.

FAITH AND PROTESTANTISM

III.

Faith and Protestantism.

‘THE just shall live by Faith’ was no new doctrine. It was not intended to be: it was supposed to be but the restatement of the original Gospel truth. The idea of the sole mediation of the Church in the reconciliation of the world, which had become the historical counterpart of the speculative thesis of theology, had run its course; its doctrines of salvation, based on the abstract methods of its thought, had hardened into the bondage of a mechanical arrangement; and the decrees of councils, re-echoing through the ages the deductions of the old reasoning process, had been constantly tightening its hold over the spirit of man. The ideas and

definitions promulgated by theology concerning the nature and work of God and of Christ had released them from all practical relations, exalted them out of the world, and set them far beyond the reach of humanity. By degrees, in the wake of its speculative ideas, the divine element in the process of reconciliation had been forced more and more away from contact with men, and had become more and more exclusive in its action, and more and more limited in its interests. The character of the Deity had been abstracted from all reality in order that it might be truly considered,—had been subdivided into separate, independent, and even opposing functions, and had become the subject of metaphysical study only. The other ideal of God, the ideal of primitive faith, comprising in one fatherly nature all his moral attributes and his loving relation to men, had been forgotten or fallen into neglect.

The same abstraction from all temporal

realities, from all human interests, was even more evident in the doctrinal treatment of the divine Son. For the idea of the Saviour had been lost in the exaltation of the King, and the Cross had been exchanged for the Throne. The Redeemer could only be reached by the intercession of the saints, and the Madonna began to take her Son's place in the affection of humanity: for the doctrine of saintly intercession and of the adoration of the Virgin were but the outward signs of the natural reaction in the hearts of men against the theological imposition of lifeless attributes in the place of the spiritual realities known to pious faith as the Father and the Saviour. The divine Sufferer was now receiving the reward of his passion: he was enthroned in glory beyond the reach of the world's woe, and his humanity had disappeared in his divinity. Even his Mother could only be thought of as '*Figlia del tuo Figlio*,' and gained her adoration as the

most powerful intercessor for his favours. This conception of mediation, the need of intercession, and the accumulation of all means to gain it, whether by the virtues of those in heaven or the sufferings of those on earth, are a measure of how far the idea of the divine in its opposition to the human had been stretched by theology in its definition of the true faith. The mediation of Christ, the mediation of the Church, the mediation of the Saints, the mediation of the Madonna, had not been enough to bring the divine again into contact with the human, or to satisfy the longings of men for that higher life which lay in unity with God. The revolt of Protestantism was a response to the cry of humanity seeking the Father in heaven.

Protestantism was of course not merely Lutheranism: it was a much broader and deeper movement than a disruption in the Church, but it took its ecclesiastical form from the prevailing prominence of the Church in all medieval life. Like all his-

torical events, it had its immediate cause in the natural progress of history, in incidents that were both local and temporary, and in a combination of opportunities which separately would have had little or no meaning. But whatever its immediate causes, however widespread its effects and varying its interpretations, for us in such an inquiry as this it can have but one explanation,—it was an attempt to return to the realities in which faith believed, to that universal view of life and religion which theology had shunned, to that concrete realisation of truth in Jesus, far from the abstract thought from which the Church had built up her symmetrical creed. The aim with which theology set out had never been fulfilled, and the simple realities which kept faith alive had been stolen and squandered in its progress. It was the revolt of the heart of humanity against the mind of the Church, the protest of what was human against what was divine. The Gospel had

become theology; theology knew only divinity; and humanity was weary of divinity,—at least as it was represented in the doctrines of the Church.

Protestantism perhaps did not know exactly what its own demands were, and they certainly could not be nailed to the church door at Wittemberg; but, for one thing, they were prompted by faith in man as much as by faith in God—or faith at last in God because of a new-found faith in man. It was perhaps now first that the development of the real truth of Christianity came gradually to recognition—namely, that neither the Church could be perfectly realised without the World, nor the reconciliation of life with faith be sought but in a unity which took equal regard of both, of the necessity of their mutual spiritual harmony. Hitherto the one side alone had been emphasised—that of the Church, that of the divine; human nature was unworthy to enter into the speculative adjustments of theology, to

claim any share in the scheme of its reconciliation, or to be represented in such a purpose except only as its object. In Protestantism humanity came to itself, and recognised the divine image, long lost to the earth, in its own features. For though the Church had been mediator in the name of the divine, it was only to an alien world; and she now found, in the Protestant claim, that in the assertion of the divine she had betrayed the human. The presentation of the divine in theology had overreached itself, and the Church, far from being now the friend of man, was regarded as his foe. The revolt was in reality a spiritual claim for man, but it took the form of a condemnation of the Church; for the Church had become to man the symbol of an unreal world, where the actuality of spiritual life or death in this world was unknown, and where her doctrines sounded only as speculative assertions, unable to remove the bonds of mental and religious doubt.

The movement took two forms,—that of Humanism, which asserted the rights of man; and that of the Reformation, which asserted the needs of man. Man as a spiritual being has more needs than rights; and it was the needs of man, in his spiritual nature, which prompted the claim of Luther for direct union with God: ‘The just shall live by faith.’ This divergence and separation of the two sides of the Protestant movement—the natural and the spiritual, as they may be termed—were due to the religious instinct of Luther, which led him to emphasise the more spiritual aspect of man’s nature, and to claim a more permanent position for man in the divine economy than any assertion of man’s rights would have done. Nor can the distinction between two such aspects of the movement be considered purely formal; for though they may not indicate contradictory views of man’s nature, yet they assume different ideals and tendencies in his development. The conceptions in

themselves are in no way irreconcilable, but they practically treat the life of man on a different principle and basis. The assertion of man's rights has often been made ; but it is a weak foundation to start from, and followed with but poor and meagre results. For such a claim, Rationalist as it is called, usually sets man in opposition to his world, in an attitude of conflict and negation to his surroundings, isolates him in the spirit of rebellion, and ends in the denial of all rights but his own. The religious spirit, on the other hand, by emphasising the needs of man, tends to bring him into ever closer union both with God and with humanity, exalts the possibilities of daily life, and is at least a step in the direction of reconciliation. It may also be said to be an even more emphatic assertion, though indirectly made, of the rights of man ; for the needs of humanity, when truly considered, are but the evidence of a spiritual nature, the ground of supremacy, and the right of

progress. For it is the privilege of a spiritual and infinite nature alone to recognise needs which the world, or a conventional and worldly Church, cannot supply ; to recognise needs because it has in spirit transcended them, and therefore can claim to satisfy its needs and to live its full life 'by faith.'

For if man has need of God, it is only because he is made for God, and his spiritual nature gives him the right of claim. He who has no needs has no rights ; for he belongs to the world as it is, and must take his part and his place in the natural economy of the universe. But when man recognises in his wants that he is not a mere creature of the world but a son of God,—fallen indeed from his high estate, but spiritual even in his fall,—then he makes claims and assertions of his rights beyond the dreams of Socialist propaganda. Men are taught by unsatisfied cravings that they have a personal claim before God, that they are not mere masses to be

treated as the 'world' or the 'secular' by the Church in his name. Each man was to Protestantism a living soul, created in the image of God, and capable, through his very yearning after it, of having that image restored; and Protestantism spoke for these spiritual rights of man as an individual, but spoke for his rights as they had been revealed through his needs. We may say, therefore, that it was the deepened consciousness of personal sin which awoke the deeper consciousness of personal worth; that this consciousness of sin was not unto death, but rather it was unto life. Sin, which was to Protestantism the great factor in the construction of theology, became the revelation of character; and character was the claim of man's spirit in the presence of God. The fear of death, with all its eternal consequences to the individual man, became the theology that the gift of God was eternal life.

It must be admitted that in restoring this idea Protestantism went back again,

at least in one form, to the root of the Gospel: in asserting the truth, namely, of the personal value of each soul for Christ, and the method of his personal dealing with each. But a one-sided view is seldom absent from any protest, nor do we look to the spirit of revolt for a full statement of any truth. And there was a large element of spiritual intolerance in the proclamation of individualism which lay in the Protestant claim; which was entirely contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, but which the reaction against the Church forced Protestantism to emphasise. The value of the life and destiny of the individual had been forgotten in the theological abstractions of the past, and in restoring this, Protestantism believed that it was restoring the whole Gospel. For to the Protestant reactionary spirit the truth of the Gospel appeared now to be summed up in that which had been so sadly lacking in the doctrine of the Church, namely, the personal relation of each man

to the Saviour; and the preaching of Protestantism, after cutting itself adrift from the Church, became practically the interpretation of a Gospel pleading with each man to accept the salvation of his own soul. Religion thus became individualism pure and simple, and degenerated in its commoner forms into a more selfish salvation. Such an attitude of mind may have been excusable then, and may at any time of reaction, and under pressure of what is called religious revival, be expected to recur, for then the natural, not the spiritual, tendencies of men prevail; but it cannot be considered encouraging that many forms of modern evangelicalism still continue, almost as a creed, such a parody of the Gospel in its appeal to each man to save himself and not to lose his chance of heaven. For the evil of such teaching lies not only intellectually in the exaltation of man into a false individualism, but morally also in the exaltation of personal selfishness and a commercial

worldly spirit into a form of religion,—in the separation of each man from his neighbour in the kingdom of God, in making the happiness of human life complete in the prospect of personal reward, and in setting each atom of humanity in a religious rivalry with all the rest. To say that the ground of such doctrines is to be traced in Protestantism is only to say that in its historical position it was a revolt, and so exaggerated the issue of combat that it lost or neglected the full meaning of its spiritual protest. For it was content to urge one claim, to emphasise one form of the Gospel teaching alone,—the claim, namely, that humanity entered into the plan of salvation as well as the Church; that the reconciliation of religion belonged to the human heart as well as to divine decrees; and that if the Church had hitherto lived by theology, the just would now live by faith.

But not only is such a position insufficient and inadequate to represent the

full meaning of Christianity, not only is individualism a one-sided presentation of its truth; in reality, Christian faith involves elements which seem at first sight opposed to it. The claim of the individual was no more characteristic of the Christian faith than was that larger claim of the Gospel which was preached by Jesus under the title of the Kingdom of God; nay, the doctrine of the kingdom may be said to be the more characteristic of the two. Yet this was practically omitted from the Protestant creed, for it had little affinity with the early Protestant spirit. Not that these views of man, as an individual and as a member of a divine kingdom, can be absolutely separated or opposed, except only in so far as they appear as different statements in the historical attempt to set forth the truth of Christianity. The right or wrong of either cannot be stated or understood without postulating in argument the opposition of the two. Yet such an opposition cannot be final; and

this is just the characteristic of the teaching of Jesus, that the individualism of the Gospel is set forth in the doctrine of the kingdom. For he conceives of the individual man not as a solitary being, separate in the universe and destitute of attributes and relations. For the individual can never truly be found in this abstraction from the reality of the whole. The individual is not less than the whole, but—if the expression may be used—more than the whole. We reach the individual not by abstracting, withdrawing, and minimising, but by relating and expanding his life until he finds it at last to be the life of the whole community, with personal self-consciousness in addition. If, therefore, a man is to be spoken of as an individual, as complete and perfect before God, this can only be in so far as he realises a common and universal, not a peculiar, relation of his own to God; for to God he is the living member from all eternity of a social organism, a personality

realised in a kingdom of men. From this point of view the Gospel of Jesus may just as accurately be termed socialistic as individualistic; and indeed it was both, for one view of humanity is impossible without the other.

It is a false individualism which asserts the completeness of each man within himself; and it is a false socialism which asserts his absorption in the community. Neither view can ever be permanent, for each is founded on a one-sided and abstract consideration of human nature—a nature which is neither in each individual independent, nor in the community lost and annihilated. Each man is always an end in himself; but this end of his being, this true self, is only realised in the race. No man liveth or dieth to himself; whether he liveth or dieth it is to humanity, and to God. Individualism is nothing, and socialism is nothing, but only the new creature—man in his relation to humanity.

To Jesus, with his faith in the Father-

hood of God, such a doctrine was instinctively true: man was a member of the divine family, and his real life was wrapped up in his relation to the whole family. For Jesus, man was not man as a separate being; he never regarded him nor spoke of him in such a light. The lowest term which would convey the true nature of man was that of member of a kingdom, and the highest was that of brother in the human family—for this involved sonship with God. Nor were these terms mere abstractions and general forms of definition; they reflected in the faith of Jesus the only means of the development of man's nature, they were the proclamation of the spirituality of man, they revealed and perfected the religion of man as much by his relations to his fellowmen as by his relations to God. Practically and actually, man's individual and spiritual life lay in this doctrine of the kingdom: he saved himself in saving others; the service of men was the service also of God. On

the same principle, Jesus was the Saviour of man because he was the Son of man; and he was Lord of all because he was first the Servant of all. The individualism of Jesus asserted man's place in the reconciliation of religion,—this was due to him not as a mere creature but as a child of God; but the socialism of Jesus asserted that man could not become a child of God except in so far as he became a member of the family of God. In this first and primitive Gospel, of faith in the nature of man's humanity, lay the basis of the last, the philosophic definition of man's true spiritual life.

To this neglect by Protestantism of the social element in the preaching of Jesus must be attributed the hard and rather selfish aspect of the Protestant religion which eventually, as its history shows, had to be rectified in two ways: first, in the direct line of Christian theology, by the movement associated with the name of Schleiermacher, in the restoration of the

universality of personal duty into the abstractions of theology,—a movement culminating in the work of Ritschl in the restoration, in a definite form, in the middle of the nineteenth century, of the doctrine of the ‘Kingdom.’ That some movement of this kind was needed to satisfy the faith of the modern Church we find justified in the result; for this restored doctrine of the Kingdom has since been the foundation of most of the theological speculation, as well as of the practical preaching, of our own time. For though it may be regretted that the way in which Ritschl and some of his followers have involved this idea with alien philosophical tenets, or rather with the want of philosophical tenets, has done much to lessen its claim and weaken the power of its appeal,—an appeal which it had naturally won by right as the much-needed, long-awaited supplement to the Protestant faith,—yet, notwithstanding, its influence in this direction at last, of restoring the

faith and guiding the thought of Christian theology, has been good in its intention and far-reaching in its results. For it, more than any other movement of modern theology, may be said to have coloured and enlivened the whole speculation of the Church since the time of its first statement. Its chief importance, however, does not lie in any application of its details to questions of Biblical or critical theology, but rather in the broad general confession which it makes that the individualism of the Protestant faith was deficient, exclusive, and indeed almost negative; and that in its neglect of one radical factor of the Gospel teaching its theology had become only a one-sided statement of Christian truth.

It is evident, as our use of the name implies, that although Protestantism was spiritual in its aim, it was perhaps more negative than positive in the endeavour it made to reach it. The truth at the root of Protestantism — namely, the direct re-

lation of man with God—was just as vital, as spiritual, as universal as had been that of the doctrine of the Church—namely, the relation of God to man. Yet the abstract and partial view of the truth thus emphasised by each in turn deprived them both of their universal character. The doctrine of the divine is no more true or universal than the doctrine of the human; but neither is sufficient in itself, neither can develop alone, neither can reveal its universality apart from the other. The Church preached a faith so comprehensive and so remote from all criticism that it seemed positive in comparison; but the Protestant faith was negative only in appearance and by the attitude it was forced to take by historical necessity. That its position was one-sided, and its statement of Christianity partial, was as true as that the Church system had been the same. But the conflict of the two views reveals more than mere opposition, more than an alternative truth; it shows us more clearly

from the point thus reached that Christianity is not really a mere statement of any one proposition, and at any time perfect and complete in itself, but rather that it is a principle and a life which can find its full realisation only in an ever-onward movement, and in a development which expands under different aspects according to the conditions of the time it has to meet. The idea of reconciliation with which the Christian faith started was a principle latent only in spiritual life,—a principle which cannot be treated as a logical proposition, or be fulfilled as a final and universal truth from either side alone, the divine or the human, the Church or the individual; but which must await fulfilment in some form of organic relation which does justice to both, and completes the reconciliation by a spontaneous harmony arising from a spiritual, not a mechanical, unity.

If we pass outside the Church, again, we find the same, or at least a similar,

movement going on. For the lay mind also was making an unconscious endeavour to supplement the truth of Protestantism in the growing doctrine of Socialism, which cared indeed little for the individual relation of man with the Deity, but refused absolutely to leave him in a solitary conflict with the world. However far socialism may have the support of reason, and its view of humanity and the laws that govern the progress of humanity be justifiable, yet socialism sprang not so much from a speculative necessity as from the pressure of unequal conditions in life and the gradual growth of a state of society which religion seemed incapable of improving. The spirit of individualism in religion was but a sublimated form of the competition of individuals and the isolation of classes in the world, and as no help seemed possible from religion, socialism took up its own parable and insisted practically that the labour and conflict of one man was the labour and conflict of all.

Socialism never reached the true ideal of the solidarity of the race, or right relation of the individual to the community; but unconsciously and practically it moved in the same direction when it insisted that the weak and the poor had a claim on the strong and the rich, that human nature was more than its conditions, and could only be satisfied with some aim at mutual good. Such teaching was the secular equivalent of the religious doctrine of the kingdom; and, notwithstanding all its extravagances in modern days, it still remains as a contribution from without the Church to the true idea of Christianity, which had been narrowed and impaired by the inadequate statement both of Church and Protestant. If Protestant theology dwelt on the needs of man as an individual soul, socialism affirmed the rights of man as a social being. The Protestant Church went on from the needs of man to his nature as a spiritual being, to the duty of man as having a soul to save, and to

the rights of man as enjoying spiritual privileges ; and Protestantism found in this religious view of his position a safeguard against extravagance or arrogance in his individual freedom. But when, in the later growth of socialism in the secular sphere, such religious restraint was withdrawn, the one-sided claim of the communistic principle ran riot, and the demand of equal rights for all men found expression in violence and disorder.

This unregulated tendency was, so far, again met and overcome in the restoration of the religious ideal, which was brought to the forefront of a new movement, the guiding spirit of which was called Christian Socialism ; which based the socialist claim once more rather upon the Christian duty to give than the communistic right to take. This doctrine of Christian socialism was in reality a protest within a protest. For it held that such a movement must affirm, not deny, the Christian spirit ; by insisting rather on the need of sacrifice than of the

claim of one upon another; by bearing, and so the bearing away, of one another's burdens; by making the right which one man may possess to be only the ground of his duty to another; and by defining a duty to man to be the same as duty to God. In all thoughts of such amelioration of life a Christian socialism implies that the progress to be aimed at begins from within—that the reformation to be attained is the result of a principle. It cannot be created, it cannot be claimed; it can only grow as the principles of true Christian life are sown among the people, and not by scattering broadcast the gifts of State aid. Universal and general good must be put before personal benefit, country before class, and society before self. Such teaching in the wider kingdom of life helps again to rectify the balance between the kingdom of the Gospel and Protestant individualism.

Individualism was no new doctrine in the history of thought, but the idea on

which it was based in the modern world differed entirely from that of the ancient. It is for this reason that modern individualism required the safeguard of duty, the idea with which Protestantism stamped it ; for it represented an attitude of mind far from the individualism of the ancient world. This was rather typified in the self-reliance of the Stoic, the self-consciousness of the virtuous man, the strength of the man whose mind was a kingdom, the calmness of the philosopher who could set his back against a wall in the storm. Men are accustomed to portray it rather as the ideal of patience and endurance and mental equilibrium, than under the modern ideal of rights and claims and privileges. The ancient was a spirit of resignation, the modern a spirit of self-assertion ; the charter of the one was law, of the other liberty. It is true that there were elements in the Protestant ideal, inasmuch as it was of Christian origin, which represented a higher view of life ; but it is also true

that its regulative idea was one of duty, which had been supreme in its authority over the older character. For the Protestant ideal was, not the right, but the duty to be free. Nevertheless the thought of privilege and of personal freedom dominated at first that of duty; it broke through the religious safeguard, and the demand to be free took the place of the need to be free; the sense of duty gave way before the fascination of personal liberty in matters of faith, and the revolt from long ages of slavery threatened to rule all scruples out of court.

There was another safeguard at least latent in the Protestant claim against excessive individualism,—which, however, was perhaps not more efficacious,—namely, that it was the spiritual man alone who could judge the faith truly. The truth was not revealed to the natural man, but only to the spiritual. If, as is so often asserted both in praise and blame, the standard of faith for Protestantism—the Bible—was

open to 'private interpretation,' at least it was not to the interpretation of the natural man, but only to the interpretation of a mind illumined by the spirit of God; so that in reality it was not the individual man that judged, but the spirit of God that was in him. The standard of truth was not despised or removed, but only transferred from the spirit of God in the Church to the spirit of God in the individual. It is a caricature of Protestantism to say that it destroyed all standards and gave up everything to the right of private judgment: all that can be said against it is that its safeguards against such a possibility were too purely spiritual.

The weakness of Protestantism may be represented rather in this, that it placed the safeguard of faith too high, creating as a standard a spiritual ideal for which men were not then prepared, nor are yet, nor probably ever will be. It seized upon the ideal of a spiritual humanity too quickly, sprang free from the bonds of church

councils, impetuously asserted the union of the soul with God, and pleaded the fulness of revelation in the heart of the spiritual man. But so long as a position like this was accompanied by a spirit of revolt, we need not wonder that the ideal was lost before it was gained. Nevertheless, in this ideal was proclaimed again the truth of the Christian faith, as the coming of the spiritual kingdom, the revelation of the divine in the human, when the Spirit would take of the things of Christ and show them unto men's souls. This was always the Gospel ideal, and will ever remain the ideal of a universal religion; for the universality of faith must be sought in the infinite scope of the new covenant, in which the laws of God are written on the heart of man, and all the commandments of God are fulfilled in the reconciliation of love. This was the Protestant doctrine; but the perversion of such a doctrine lay evident on the very threshold. The spiritual duty became at once the

privilege and the right, and the spiritual standard was lowered to the individual feeling and fancy.

If individualism can anywhere be saved it must be in the religious sphere, for there chiefly are the interests and responsibilities of life represented as matters of personal conviction. The freedom of aims and interests, which in the world is regulated only by the limit of external means and developed only by external competition, is regulated in religion by the influence of an inward allegiance to spiritual, not commercial, ideals. But as the State has had in many cases to regulate by statute the unrestrained licence of competition, so has the Church had ever and again to lay its hand on the unrestrained extravagance of personal religious faith. The ideal indeed must ever be religious liberty; but a perverted ideal becomes the worst form of error. For it is here we find the apotheosis of the half-truth, which misleads more than the false; it retains its sanction, though

perverted in its interpretation. And individualism in faith affords the surest ground for misinterpretation: the standard of personal conviction is so pure, personal feeling is so strong, and the call so indisputable, that all doubt is silenced, all hesitation shaken off, and man speaks and acts under what seems to him a clear spiritual authority.

Yet, if we regard the Protestant position from the highest point of view, a man is not even in this personal faith an isolated being, created in conversion by the power of God's spirit, and brought by himself as an individual into a new world. Rather he is more than ever the heir of all the ages, in his new humanity as a spiritual being; for if, naturally, he recognised himself as the child of his own surroundings, the creation of fixed conditions of life, spiritually also he is fashioned from without as well as from within, guided by influences over which he has himself little choice or control, a part of the very

history from which he thinks he is spiritually withdrawn, and receiving the standard of his personal life and religious truth not from himself alone, but only from himself as representing the gradual growth of all these tendencies of history and religion of which he is but a single and passing form. The individual is a microcosm, an epitome of the whole; he cannot separate himself from life either as a natural or a religious being; his standard of faith is not true in isolation, but only approximates ever nearer to the truth as he finds his life in others; he understands himself, whether naturally or spiritually, only when he understands his world. The truth of the individual, therefore, is the truth of all that has produced him; not the momentary illumination of faith only, but all the gathered light of history and society. His view of religious truth, if from his own individual standpoint, must ever be an abstraction, a portion, not the whole, of truth. But the religious consciousness of

man satisfies faith, just because it presents to him at the same time a truth so personal and yet so universal, a spirit so meek and yet so transcendent, as to grasp in its range the whole of life and thought. And this attitude therefore in religion satisfies also reason, not at all because 'faith is intellectual,' but simply because it is a token of the universal nature of man, because it represents a consciousness which goes out beyond itself, because it reveals a life which cannot find rest until it rests in God.

Now, though the spirit of Protestantism sufficed for personal faith, even intensified personal faith, it could not as a doctrine of individualism be universalised by reason; it was not true for reason. Faith, whether individual or not, must satisfy reason; bear within itself the token of something beyond itself; express implicitly a universal nature and truth which reason can acknowledge; and seek in feeling to satisfy a longing which reason alone

can explicate and verify. But this can never mean that individual faith is to be verified—as has been proposed, for instance, by Professor James in his *Gifford Lectures*—by an appeal to the experience of many other individuals; for, however many they may be, yet we must regard them in themselves merely as an aggregation of finite understandings, not to be substituted for the standard of the universal reason which guides the world and is tending to the ideal. Reason leads faith into a realm in which, even more truly than in her own, all must be members of one another, and the individual realise himself in the race. The opinion of one man is but the opinion of one man, and, however often multiplied, remains only a finite basis for religion. Religion cannot be based on a psychological study of individuals: if it does not assert of itself some infinite principle, reveal some token of the universal, and express a consciousness that is eternal and divine, it is no

longer religion,—our faith is vain. If, as Professor James suggests, philosophy is to become psychology, then religion may as well become public worship.

The religious faith of one man represents at least implicitly the standard of truth, whether or not it is verified by comparison with the experience of other men. Such a comparison in historical completeness is of course impossible, and, therefore, it would also be impossible for any individual ever to assert his conviction of absolute truth. But, even were such a comparison completed, it would still lack the element of universality which is the essential characteristic implied in religious faith, and which is confirmed by reason, not because it is rendered plausible by the number of its adherents, but because it is the expression of a heart in touch with the universe of God. For, if man is not universal in his spirit and infinite in his nature, there is no religion and no need for religion. But faith is the promise

of this universal element; though it is only as a promise it is universal, only because it later is rational. And as for us faith acknowledges the standard of the Christian religion, and finds in the teaching of Jesus the universal truth, the comparison of a man's convictions with the spirit of Jesus is for us a comparison with the universal standard. But in this very act of comparison he ceases to be merely an individual; he recognises a universal spirit in himself: it is no more he that lives, but Christ that liveth in him. It is in becoming one with Christ that each man becomes a standard for himself, but not otherwise. For in allegiance to the spirit of Christ he has subordinated himself to an absolute standard of truth, and this truth has made him free. In this reconciliation of the individual with the universal there is no mechanical gift of a new nature, only the recognition of his own infinite faith, and his subordination of it to the doctrine of Christ that it is of God. He

now knows the mind of the Spirit, and is in bondage to no man.

It may therefore be admitted that the teaching of Protestantism was not in intention a pure individualism, since the standard of faith was Christ; but it must also be admitted that this latent truth was not fully realised, much less acted upon. For, on the one hand, the thought of liberty ran away with the judgment of believers; and, on the other, the difficulty imposed upon the believer of interpreting either the Bible as a standard of truth, or the character of Jesus as the fulfilment of the law, made it almost impossible to keep clear of views which were in harmony with neither. Another step was still needed, even had this personal interpretation been possible or successful, in order to bring men nearer to the absolute truth of Christianity,—and that was, to regard the Christ as embodying in himself truths not only of a special religious significance, but of the universal reason that lay at the

root of the world-order; to discern that the Christ represented something beyond himself; and to accept the subordination of Christ to the law of the universe to be faith in a law that was not only eternal, but also righteous, and for the good of man. The faith of Christ was faith in the universe, as the counterpart of the divine thought; and our faith in him represents our allegiance to the whole truth of God's purpose in the universe, as it is gradually unfolded as well in the World as in the Church.

IV.

FAITH AND RATIONALISM

IV.

Faith and Rationalism.

THE movement which has been designated by the name of Rationalism may be described as the development of the secular side of Protestantism. As Protestantism was a movement based on the value of individual faith, so was Rationalism a movement in the name of the individual reason. In reality, the spirit of Rationalism may be said to have been latent in Protestantism as part of its natural development as much as its merely historic descendant. For a movement, such as Protestantism was, directed against authority in any sphere of life or thought, is bound in the end, whatever ground it may assume at the beginning, to give a reason for its

revolt and to set up arguments to prove its right to a new position. Protestantism was thus rationalist in its method if not in its creed, and, historically, it became infected with the rationalist method before Rationalism had come distinctly into being. The theology of Protestantism gradually assumed the argumentative position, and many of her later theologians were rationalists in disguise. For, now that the authority of the Church had been removed, the demands of reason had to be satisfied, and faith in Christianity justified from a new point of vantage. The appeal to the authority of the Bible had been pitched too high, and it was found that what might be true in theory would not work in practice: the spiritually-minded man was the exception, and not the rule. Inevitably, therefore, the appeal to the Bible became an appeal to proofs for its authority within the comprehension of the ordinary man, arguable and demonstrable to the common intelligence of mankind. And so

by degrees the position of Protestantism, which was first based on the spiritual intuition of man, came at least in one of its developments to stand rather on what was called 'the reasonableness of Christianity.'

But with Rationalism proper we have here to do only in so far as it had for its chief impetus an assault against the one-sided claim of Supernaturalism in religion. In regarding man as a rational, rather than as a religious, being, it discussed the demands for his allegiance on either side, and made the chief scope of its inquiry the settlement of the boundaries between reason and religion. But the question of this antithesis of reason and religion, of nature and the supernatural, it took for granted. And in a general way, and speaking the ordinary language of daily life, a broad division between these two spheres may be taken for granted,—between the emotional and the reflective, the practical and the speculative attitude

of man to life; for they represent two views of the world and of humanity sufficiently distinct to be regarded as guiding lines for thought and study. But that such a general and popular distinction may be pressed into actual opposition, and the assumed opposition become the basis of a philosophical argument, is far beyond the legitimate use of the contrast, which in ordinary discussion both faith and reason are willing to admit. But it is just this characteristic limitation of philosophical inquiry, the dividing up of great questions into sections and superficial distinctions, and the pursuit of victory on some chosen field of argument, that has marked out and classified this movement as one rather of intellectual skill than of earnest contemplation, rather of dialectical subtlety than grasp of truth. From the absence of this larger scope in the treatment of the ultimate problems of the speculative reason, and from the discussion almost exclusively of the narrower issues and

applications arising within the limits of ordinary experience, this school of thought has been generally denied the broader name of philosophy, and handed down to us simply as Rationalism. And the distinction in nomenclature is just; for its inquiries are circumscribed by such assumptions and limitations as to make its view both of Christianity and of reason not only one of a merely historical interest, but one now almost local and personal. Compared with the epoch-making studies of the great minds, whether of the ancient or the modern world, it is but the philosophy of the man in the street, both arbitrary in its negations and superficial in its conclusions; it knows little of the true realm of thought, and dwells almost entirely in regions of logical and analogical argument.

The limitations of Rationalism, in attempting to deal with the great problems of life and mind, are well illustrated in its relation to religion. For in this first postulate of the separation of these two

domains, in the tacit acceptance of the opposition of reason and religion, it doomed itself to failure as a treatment of the subject on any broad philosophical principles, as likely to afford rational means of approaching any higher unity, or of finally satisfying the mind of man in its search for the reconciliation which religion proposed to itself as its aim. The postulation, to begin with, that there is a natural and a supernatural separate from and irreconcilable with each other, that the one belongs to the province of reason and the other exclusively to revelation, and that they are to be regarded as so completely apart as to be cognisable only by different human faculties,—this is the postulation of a dualism which cannot later be got over. For the methods of Rationalism not only set natural and supernatural, reason and revelation, over against one another as in possible or probable opposition, but assumed the right to deny from the commencement any possibility of their reconciliation; for

the one was defined simply as the negation of the attributes of the other, and the law of contradiction thereby excluded any reconciliation between them. This question of their relation, the ever-recurring question in the history of thought, is thus considerably simplified, as all such relations were when, in the rationalistic process, they were split into contradictions, treated as independent, and set each side by side unassailable in its own right. But this simplicity of reasoning was gained only by a logic of separation, not one of comprehension; and naturally such a method brings no solution of the world's problems: it is the false simplicity of an atomistic philosophy, which is satisfied when it merely classifies things as they are found in experience, and seeks no bond of deeper union.

It is a token of the same superficial method that Rationalism proceeds from this division of the realms of reason and religion to divide up the unity of con-

sciousness in a manner corresponding, into adjacent but exclusive 'faculties,' each with a separate function and sphere, for reason or revelation as the case may be. Hence we meet continually arguments based on the assumption of the separate existence of a 'reasoning faculty,' a 'religious sentiment,' or a 'moral sense'; arguments carried out to a conclusion supposed to be valid for the life and thought of humanity, yet without any reference to the actual conditions of thought or character, but only built on the foundation of such fictitious terms and faculties. The unreality of much of the rationalist argument, and the sense of formality in the controversy waged on the weightiest problems, arise from its separation from all interest in real human nature and its search for truth in the varied combinations of such figments of the imagination. It was a war of hypothetical faculties, in which victory or defeat on either side gave men no alarm or anxiety. It is characteristic

of the whole movement that its literature, not its philosophy, was effective.

But such a position affords no fresh or illuminating point of view; it only treats as philosophy the ordinary consciousness of man, and even rends the sense of original unity which human nature provides for us. For, if religion appeals to one faculty and reason to another, all hope of seeing them reconciled is at an end: what is knowable by the one faculty is unknowable by the other, and the two views of life may thus be at absolute variance. This classification of faculties, and of subjects with which they are specially associated, produces a certain system and regulated order, but not unity in life. Rationalism goes far enough to give to life the unity of a catalogue, but not that of a book; for the order impressed upon it is artificial, not that of a natural formation. If there is any unity in such a process, it is a unity which is found first by separating things as they appear to the

ordinary consciousness, and then stamping them with the authority of thought. The homogeneity which ought at least to be supposed possible in life is sacrificed to analysis, the endeavour of a true philosophy to reconcile its various elements is abandoned, and a classification of its separate faculties is considered to be final. Instead of proceeding from the recognised analogy of a natural unity to the higher, because conscious, combination of a spiritual unity, Rationalism is content to regard the dissection of the natural into its component parts as the sufficient work of reason and as the final solution of the problem of consciousness.

In modern language, it may be said that a psychological test for the mental and spiritual nature of man can never be final. While it is the province of psychology to analyse and separate the various elements and processes of our conscious states, it cannot pass beyond these to deal with Consciousness by itself, or to combine

again from without into a working unity those forms of consciousness which from within it can sever and describe. There is a unity which psychology must postulate below all these mental states, apart from which all these would remain but opposing and unrelated atoms—namely, the unity of the Self. This is a unity which psychology cannot reach, but which is known both to religion and to philosophy. It is for this reason that Psychology in vain poses either as the one or as the other. Religion postulates the identity and the eternal value of the Self, by faith; and philosophy postulates the same in confessing its inability to construct either the experience of the individual or a knowledge of the universe without the priority of self-consciousness. But the subdivision of the self-consciousness of man into separate compartments, or states of mind, satisfies psychology, whose work and province indeed lie just in this—the collection and arrangement of material for valuation by

philosophy. This first claim of Rationalism, therefore, is based only on the limited foundation of psychology—in so far as it agrees to regard the reconciliation sought for by religion as met and solved in the assumption that religion belongs only to one sphere of life, and not to life as a whole; in so far as it is satisfied with a unity for religion which simply excludes all variety or combination; and in so far as its ideal of a spiritual harmony is that of a classified and departmental view of life.

But it was the implication which underlay this attitude of Rationalism which was its historical characteristic—namely, that in reality the separate religious sphere was unnecessary. This, indeed, was the final meaning of the term Rationalism, that the individual reason was a sufficient guide for man, that the law of nature was the law of reason, and that natural religion, therefore, if any religion, was all that man required. For religion, being non-rational,

could not be regarded as of the essence of life, only as a useful and directing influence for those to whom reason was not a sufficient means in itself. As there was no necessary correlation between reason and religion either historically or logically, the inference was that, if the supernatural was not rational, it could be dispensed with, as reason alone should be found to suffice for all the wants of human nature. The claim of Rationalism thus to portion out the functions of man's nature, to identify him with only one side of it, and to make that suffice for all, already implies an entirely arbitrary test of the value, and even the existence, of his so-called faculties, and places that external test to be decided by arguments of counsel at the bar of legal reason. It is in such a sense that the existence of the supernatural is in question: as a test case is at law subjected to the decision of expert knowledge and legal discrimination, but not at all as a matter of life and death for humanity, or

as essential to the very meaning of personality and the existence of the soul. Now the argument in favour of or against the supernatural is based upon the supposition that all aspects of life must be capable of a rational statement, and a negative decision is implied against any spiritual nature of man which cannot be so expressed in terms of reason. This is the innuendo in the ironical suggestion in Gibbon's phrase about 'Human reason, which by its unassisted strength is incapable of perceiving the mysteries of faith.' What could not be reduced to the syllogisms of the logical reason might without loss be left alone.

But even if a broader philosophy than Rationalism seems to make the same statement when it declares that the only reconciliation possible is to be sought in the belief that man's spiritual nature cannot be separated from his rational nature, and that faith itself must be rational, still that does not mean or imply that religion must

be expressed in terms of reason or else dismissed. Religious faith must indeed be rational—that is, it must not occupy an isolated and non-rational sphere; but it may have, and has, a necessity of its own, and a content of its own, which pass the power of reason to express. Religion may be justified by reason, without being put either to the same work or subjected to the same test. There are elements of faith which transcend reason, both in scope and in expression, which are not to be regarded as on that account contradictory of it, but rather supplementary: they have a necessity of their own which reason recognises. Reason, for example, cannot by itself unaided construct the final argument for the unity of the universe. In essaying such a task—the aim and ideal both of reason, religion, and life—even before reason's work begins, there are grounds of faith presupposed; for it is faith which already lays the foundation of reason's work in the postulation of a Self, of reality, of spiritual

ideals, without which the unity of the universe cannot even be spoken of, and the necessity of which reason justifies to faith, but cannot herself create. Thus it may be said that at the extreme limit of reason's work in the pursuit of knowledge, the last step in its attainment is in a sense a religious one; for it is faith alone which can supply the ultimate ideal of a world-unity required, or bridge the gulf between knowing and being. At the limit also of reason's work in moral science, whether in the analysis of motives by reflection, in the definition of the spheres and relations of duty, or in the scientific statement of the continuity of moral life and action, it is religion which at last responds to the demand of reason in finding a harmony of all man's moral endeavours in that infinite and universal which is called by religion God. For without such aid of faith reason will ever remain unequal to the task of reconciling these problems of the universe; for it is just this highest unity in God

which can never be proved, but which must be postulated as the first ground of action and the last reality of knowledge. And it is in this necessary co-ordination of these two that the inherent unity of the rational and spiritual in man's life is revealed; for the demand of Rationalism for a scrutiny of religion in the name of reason is found in the end to be the justification of the instinct and ideal of faith. Though the rationality of faith is not to be 'proved'—as Rationalism is only willing to guarantee it—by any external logical argument, by demonstration as to the plausibility of its grounds or utility of its methods, or by a controversial victory as to the reliability of its truth or its revelation, all to be sanctioned by the individual reason of man; yet it may still be proved by the supremacy of its own inner claim as an essential element along with reason for any explanation of the universe.

Perhaps nowhere is the one-sided attitude of Rationalism toward this reconcilia-

tion of the world, first gained by faith, more evident than in this desire to bring religion to the bar of reason for justification or condemnation; the desire to have all truth, of whatever kind and in whatever sphere, 'demonstrated' and 'proved'; the desire to emphasise not the universal appeal or the inherent truthfulness of religion to the necessities of life and mind, but rather the ordinary test of the conformity of the claims of religion to the reasoning faculty of man, and the possibility of putting its statements into the syllogistic processes of thought. But such a test took no cognisance either of faith or reason in their universal character, while it was in this universality alone there lay the common element to justify them both — namely, that tendency towards a higher unity in which faith should find the discords of life, and reason the imperfections of thought, transcended and reconciled. Their truest function and their highest claim were realised alike in the universal reach of both

beyond all school logic, forward into a sphere where faith grasped and reason justified the unity of all in God.

But for Rationalism there were no such functions associated either with faith or reason. There was no conception of a universal reason immanent in the world, and by relation to which the world-processes must be harmoniously evolved, or of ideals of faith in a final unity of the same evolution which gave to religion universality as a necessary attribute. The reason of Rationalism was but the reasoning powers of each individual man. And therefore the line of argument employed by Rationalism followed the well-known and well-worn course of criticism of the 'internal,' and 'external,' and 'historical' evidences of Christianity, which were taken up piece-meal and adjudicated upon as likely or unlikely, probable or improbable. Rationalism was fond of 'mathematical demonstrations,' and appeals to 'the law of nature,' which were the supreme stand-

ards of value for the credibility of every truth. It was the spirit of the age. For such an attitude to religion was characteristic both of opponents and apologists, and the whole controversy, for and against, was carried out on a level not much higher than that of the ordinary debating society. And such an appeal to reason could not well be more fruitful, for reason was but the logical understanding, whose duty was solely the regulation and systematising of the material of experience, the sifting of thoughts and ideas according to classes, the distribution of sentiments and emotions in the various compartments of the mind.

There is in this view, however, a totally false conception of the reference which should be made by religion for the sanction of reason. For the separate approval or condemnation by the understanding of each man, however capable or incapable, is no universal criterion for religion; it remains only an individual judgment according to the calculation and capacity of

each character. The name of reason, as a criterion in such a connection, is not applicable to a function of the ordinary individual understanding, and it gives a false air of authority to any rationalist theory which is supposed competent on such terms to pronounce religion to be either rational or irrational. It is another form of subjective idealism, which in religion was found inadequate as a criterion of Protestant truth, and which has been for ever abandoned in other spheres as the criterion of any theory of knowledge. Religion can never seek its justification at the hand of any man who chooses to exercise his powers of reasoning about its tenets; it cannot stand or fall according to the capacity of the individual to accept or reject its claims; it is not to be taken up or laid down as an arguable accident of life. The reason which justifies religion is the reason of the universe, which reveals religion, not surely as something external and supernatural, but as inhering in human

life, and taking up as its natural characteristic the explaining and harmonising of his experience. For it is just in this value and necessity of religion for the life of man that its rationality consists. It relies on the approbation of a rational universe, not on the approbation of a casual individual, as to what he deems to be useful or expedient for humanity.

It was under the *régime* of rationalist individualism that the Christian religion became the great theme for subtlety of argument, the accepted subject for disputation, the stock material of theoretical proof. The chief function of Christianity was to furnish not the ideal of a common humanity, but the cause and occasion for dialectical skill, and food for the digestion of the learned. The spirit of the age of Rationalism was not an endeavour to comprehend the universe in the light of Christ, but only to enjoy the intellectual amusement of building up or casting down the theses of Church doctrine. Revealed re-

ligion was handled only as a set of questions might be which were proposed for the discussion of the intelligent, as a set of propositions which might in the result be found to be true or false, at the most, as a subject for historical investigation and antiquarian research. It was not regarded as embodying in another form the same universal principle as reason, as having for its chief characteristic the victorious harmony of human life, or as in itself so essential for the spiritual welfare of mankind as to transcend all argument and choice. Christianity was classed with other religions as but an interesting experiment in the treatment of the supernatural; and the supernatural was to Rationalism but another term for the unknown.

Religion, therefore, suffered at the hand of Rationalism, both in its form as faith, and in its contents as dealing with the supernatural. For the supernatural was not supposed to consist of such elements as Personality, Consciousness, Character,

Duty, Love, but was only the sphere of opposition to all that is real and the negation of all that is natural. It was the sphere of the uncertain, where speculation was free; the sphere of the unknown, where 'credulity performed the office of faith.' The supernatural, therefore, far from being the true reality of life as well as of eternity, was treated only as a waste unpeopled province for the exercise of the human intellect, which could roam there in unlimited and unregulated freedom; it was no-man's-land, at auction among the philosophers, to be possessed for what it was worth by any school which should offer the most likely title for its proof. So dualism became the accepted law of the universe: it was divided into that which could be proved, and that which could not be proved; and that which could not be proved was handed over to faith.

And the decision of the eighteenth century to designate this unknown portion to faith has largely influenced the belief of,

and been accepted by, succeeding ages. The reason probably is to be found in this, that such a decision is in accordance with the readiest judgment of the ordinary consciousness and the logical understanding of men. Rationalism gave the stamp of philosophy to the current judgment of mankind in a superficial and trifling age: it opened religion without scruple to the so-called rational criticism of a method which all could follow; it trod a path where way-faring men, though fools, could not err, for every man found the standard of eternal reality to be subject to the judgment of critical pedants. The decision for faith or against it, for revelation or reason, for nature or religion, was awaited with interest from year to year, according to the appearance of combatants and controversialists, the supremacy of an 'attack' or 'vindication,' the fashion of a court or a clique. The value of the 'supernatural' rose and fell according as an invective or an epigram inspired or depressed the faith of

the crowd. The same fascination clings still to the same method—the fascination of applying the ordinary and ready-made judgments of daily life to map out the mysteries of religion, to establish faith by argument, and distinguish truth by common-sense.

Faith, therefore, under such a discipline, became synonymous, not with the assured grasp of all reality, but with the idea of a ‘venture’—a venture into the unknown, a sacrifice of all certainty, a trust only where, and because, a man cannot see. Even the determination to verify faith and establish it by proof naturally resulted in distrust and practical scepticism; for what needs proof is always open to doubt. The more, therefore, that faith was ‘vindicated,’ the more it lost all decision and certitude; became but a choice of the more or less likely; a plunge into the dark, with the hope of success. This idea, however inconsistent, that faith implies doubt, has clung to religious thought, especially in evan-

gelical circles; the element of uncertainty is estimated as an increase of the virtue of trust, and the notion of venturing all on the unseen is supposed to give heroic self-sacrifice to the religious consciousness. In this the old dictum of the Scholastic teaching, 'Credo quia impossibile,' receives its modern equivalent. For however absurd it may seem that the most important decision of life should depend on what is uncertain, that God himself is to be regarded as unreliable, and our conviction of spiritual truths without sufficient guarantee, still this view of the function and vocation of faith has a fascination which attracts the superstitious, a mystery which appeals to the religious-minded, and a distinction between religion and reason which the ordinary intelligence delights to affirm. Indeed the reconciliation of the universe under a single point of view, which would confirm the ideal of faith by establishing the demand of reason, might, to the evangelical mind, seem rather a profane attempt

to simplify what is best left difficult, and to rob religious faith of its heroism by showing that it is not unreasonable.

As thus the supernatural became empty of all content, and in itself more a negative than a positive idea, it ceased to have any practical influence on the religious life. The sanctions of religion were sought in the laws of the natural, or at least in the analogies of the natural transferred to a supernatural sphere. For the supernatural having become a mere negation, its place had to be filled by a sublimated natural. The further that the reason of Rationalism undermined the spiritual superstructure, the further the religion of Rationalism had to find its path by way of analogy from nature. For religion, the natural became the standpoint, the supernatural the inference: life and morality, bereft of their spiritual ideals at the hand of reason, could gain no more from religion than the aims which 'the life of nature' afforded. The foundations of religion were regarded as

more securely based on the natural which could be seen than on the supernatural which could not be seen; and 'natural religion' had more to say for itself in the rationalist creed than 'revealed religion.' But this false opposition of the two, which was the proud standpoint of Rationalism, allowed no province of reason beyond the individual intellect, and no province of spirit beyond a miraculous revelation. Reason defined the rational as simply not the revealed, and the spiritual as not the natural: these were the negative conclusions, the only conclusions possible, from such an attitude of mind. Faith therefore transferred her sanctions in the natural by way of analogy to the supernatural, and left the ideal of religion frankly utilitarian; so that the argument for a religious life was thought then to become most weighty when it took the form of personal advantage; and even charity and sympathy, and other such virtues, were chiefly commended because

they brought both reputation and reward to the philanthropic man. Religion was worked upon a principle which did not differ much from that of profit and loss; and to show that religious faith would result in personal gain and social esteem was the highest argument in its favour.

Even on the intellectual side of the religious defence against Rationalism we find the arguments for faith saturated with the rationalist spirit. The 'mechanical ingenuity' argument of Paley, and the 'analogical reasoning' of Butler, were in England the standard marks of religious deduction. In Butler, who was probably the greatest of the defenders of the faith, we find an argument not only rationalist in method and spirit, but even supplying actual weapons for the use of Rationalism. For the thesis, by first taking for granted the being of God, is not afraid to set the process of revelation on the same level as the process of the natural world, secure in its dependence on a God who regulates

both, the one by analogy from the other. But if the postulate of the existence of God be denied, the argument rather strengthens the position that the natural is more important than the revealed. Paley also uses a double-edged argument in appealing to the ingenuity of nature as a proof of the being of an intelligent God; for here again, if the proof be—as it certainly must be—imperfect, the ingenuity of the processes of nature is all in favour of the Deistic contention that the world can do very well with an absentee God. It is thus impossible to make much distinction between the deists and the divines; for the attitude of both to the spirit of religion, and to the methods of argument employed, is almost the same.

For such arguments as the theologians employed are all directed to a proof of the existence of a Deity who is only a lifeless abstraction and compilation of metaphysical attributes: they exclude God from his own world, and break up any

relation or interest between the divine Spirit and humanity; and they possess no more reality for the ordinary mind on the intellectual side than the corresponding deductions do on the religious side, though, unlike them, they do not offend against good taste or religious feeling. For under the rationalist doctrine of individualism all the finer charities of life were in danger of being lost, and were gradually replaced by an extravagance of superficial philanthropy, social affectations, and nominal regard and goodwill. For morally, as well as intellectually, the sanctions of the religious life had become entirely external; the claim of the supernatural was but the counterpart of the legal rules and social maxims of the natural; and even the philosophic selfishness which ruled the life of the one was transferred as the standard of the other. Especially the doctrine of the pre-eminence in man's motives and actions of 'pleasure and pain,' in the natural order, suggested the same motive

in the spiritual, and became the standard of the hopes or fears of men for the future, until all the noblest actions lost—at least theoretically—their nobility, and were prompted chiefly ‘with a view to eternal life.’ Yet if the definition of happiness be correct, that it is ‘to enjoy God for ever,’ the enjoyment which rationalist religion looked forward to was lost by the spirit in which it was gained.

In this idea of legality—of a utilitarian morality in life and the fair distribution of rewards and penalties at death—lay the final solution offered by Rationalism of the reconciliation so passionately sought by faith. It was a reconciliation only in name. All that reason, as understood by Rationalism, had been able to accomplish was—a demonstration of the existence of a Deity, who was in person removed absolutely from all relation with the world and with man, and in character was an unreal and abstract epitome of philosophical ideas; a demonstration, on the other

hand, of man, supreme and independent in himself, whose limited individual understanding was the measure and standard of all things; and reason supplied the only bond of unity, a utilitarian attitude toward life and a speculative hesitation toward eternity. The unity, therefore, at its best was quite independent of any reciprocal or mutual relation, any personal reliance or allegiance, any comfort or consolation. It was only a contract—as dualistic as the old Jewish covenant, but reached from the human side by the light of reason, not from the divine side by the fiat of revelation. But even such a contract was tainted by a selfishness, or at least self-assurance, which was absent from the more austere contract of the Jewish faith; for it was one out of which man had taken as much moral responsibility as he could, and in which God was bound by human reason as the sole standard of divine equity.

The idea of contract was always of course latent in Christian theology, if not in the

Christian religion; but it was only under the influence of Rationalism that it was drawn out to all its consequences, and became in eighteenth-century religion a legal arrangement and the ground of a 'self-regarding' morality. For although the mediation of Christ may have nominally remained, yet it was rather as the expression of some rational bond which was felt to be still necessary between God and man,—the expression of the theory of contract, which, founded on reasonable conditions, eclipsed the Christian idea and practically took its place. It was, however, just as external a form of mediation as the other; for though in the one case the arrangement was disregarded as the work of Christ, and in the other was regarded as the intelligent arrangement of man, yet there was nothing necessary in it or inevitable, nothing essentially belonging to the nature of man, nothing which brought him to seek rest in relation with God. It was an affair satisfactory to the intelligence of two

contracting parties, the bond between whom was quite free of any personal feeling, a matter of calm and reasonable negotiation. Here the reason of Rationalism failed where most it was needed, for, while despising the external mediation of a miraculous revelation, it yet offered in itself no new way. There was nothing in the rationalist idea of the nature of God, or of man, or of reason, which was either universal or organic; there was not in it anything creative or constructive, anything that developed into a mutual reconciliation, or anything the fulfilment of whose final cause was found in transcending self in union with another. The reason of Rationalism was sterile: nothing more came forth from it than the critical understanding had put into it. The whole attitude of Rationalism was negative and destructive: it had no veneration for the religion of the past, and it contributed no living thought to the faith of the future.

Thus, though it was a movement which

was carried out in the name of reason, it had none of the fruits of reason, for its ideal of reason was simply the limited understanding of the individual. Individualism is not the fruit of reason in its true nature; and the attempts which Rationalism itself made to get quit of the limits of individualism were not successful. For the highest view the rationalist philosophers could reach of man was simply that of the individual in the abstract,—the idea of man gleaned from the contemplation of a number of individuals, but impoverished in the process. He retained all the attributes and limitations of the individual, only in an attenuated and lifeless form; in his highest ideal he still bore the form of a separate and unrelated being, not the shape of a living man possessing a universal nature, member of an organic living society, developing his true humanity by union with all other men, and with the world, and God. Consequently the idea was unfruitful, and gave no new opportunity

to religion of reaching any final reconciliation from the side of human nature alone, as Rationalism had attempted. For the relation of man to humanity, and his religious attitude towards God, were entirely extraneous and incidental to the idea of his nature. His social relations were distinctly arbitrary and 'self-regarding,' and his religious relations were neither necessary nor inevitable. Thus the abstract and ideal 'Man' was neither rich nor fruitful in the nature he was supposed to possess, but, on the contrary, reason finds him rather empty and poor. He was still the individual—ideal indeed, but not real.

This idea, of abstracting from the reality of human nature in order to make it more divine, brings the reconciliation no nearer. It is but another token of the false claim to reason which Rationalism made. Reason, in its true conception, cannot rest in abstractions and dualisms: that is the sphere of the individual understanding. Abstraction haunts individualism: for in every

attitude it assumes it is still but a partial point of view. Its metaphysics are but a critical process of abstraction, in which man is stripped of his human surroundings, freed from the supposed limitations of time and space, but freed from these only to become a nonentity. Rationalism dealt in the same refining way with the idea of God: He was separated from reality, removed from contact with the world, and became the great First Cause, the perfect Intelligence, the abstract Being. He was a creation of the mind only, a collection of meaningless metaphysical attributes, without any character behind to move or to use them. So also was it with the idea of Nature: it was sublimated by the same process, until the 'law of nature' denoted no rational development in the actual world, but was simply the name for a metaphysical conception, formed in the mind as a comprehensive term to represent things as they are, only in the abstract,—without any fixed character,

any relation to thought, any real or recognised motive.

Thus, so far as regards the reconciliation which mankind was prompted to seek in faith, the emphasis laid on the individual as a rational being was of less result even than the emphasis laid by Protestantism on the individual as a religious being.

V.

FAITH AND IDEALISM

V.

Faith and Idealism.

IDEALISM restored to the reconciliation won by faith the equilibrium which it had lost in passing through its various historical phases from the unity of the religious consciousness towards the unity of a rational expression. Faith as faith, that is, in the religious soul, never itself lost the true sense of proportion in the reconciliation of God and man: the one was ever essential to the other. On the one hand, for faith Jesus Christ has been the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. A spiritual appeal never fails: whether it be the moral law, the Gospel, or the Cross, it defies time and change. For faith, the personality of Jesus has al-

ways been central; criticism has never been allowed to approach it; it remains sacred to spiritual fellowship and communion. Faith has instinctively clung to Christ, not to doctrines or to truths about him; it has recognised that no other foundation can be laid than that is laid. Jesus dominates the whole realm of faith by his power to supply the spiritual ideals which humanity seeks: every man feels a further possibility in his life than he has ever reached, and this he sees realised in Jesus; every man yearns for a point of view to reconcile the problems of the world and the contradictions of life, and this he sees attained in Jesus; every man is reformed in life by a thought which commands his own, and to this he bows in the character of Jesus. But on the other hand, faith realises itself in human life: all things are possible to him that believeth: man under the influence of faith becomes a new creature; to him has been

given power to become the son of God; he is sure of himself, because he has become sure of God. Man's power under the influence of faith is unlimited; he can do all things through Him that strengtheneth him; God worketh in him to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Even the most extreme expressions of self-abnegation and unworthiness were but the forms in which the personal bond asserted itself; the child came to himself only through the sense of separation, and then returned to the Father. The first step in the assertion of this reconciliation was but the protest of the soul that the bond had never been broken, it was the denial of the right of sin to make a separation: 'It is not I that sin, but sin that dwelleth in me;' the final step was the restoration of the eternal unity, and the recognition of the completeness of the life of man in God, 'It is not I that live, but Christ that liveth in me.' To simple faith there was no

real loss of equilibrium, no instability between God and man, no search for an artificial mediation, because the reconciliation was but the return of man's heart 'to heaven which was his home.' This mutual dependence also was untroubled because it was spontaneous, and was brought out in the actual needs of life, not in speculative argument or mental processes. To the penitent sinner God was not an abstraction, but the Father of Jesus; and the sinner himself claimed the place of a child, not by the external intercession of a stranger, but by right of a living faith and spiritual affinity which made him one with Jesus. There was no disturbing element to shake the primitive faith of the disciple or the penitent, as to-day there is still no disturbing element in the heart of the faithful follower of Jesus. The disturbing element appeared with the appearance of thought, and with the desire to explain and set forth the process of re-

conciliation as an abstract truth. It appeared when theology took up religion apart from life, and treated it not as the creation of faith but as the subject of thought.

For, as we have seen, the first step of theology in the study of this doctrine of reconciliation was the sundering of what was to faith a natural unity and affinity between God and man, a unity which the soul claimed as its inherent right, and which faith perceived that the life of Jesus revealed in its perfect harmony. And this rending of the unity of faith was inevitable, for the first step of thought is always analysis, though its last is always synthesis. This ultimate synthesis was already implicitly reached by faith and appropriated as its own in the life of Jesus. Thought had in some way—as in another sphere the aim of Art has also through patient study—consciously to return to that synthesis through a deeper analysis, restoring again in a higher form

of harmony the original beauty which it seemed to break up and destroy. But theology never reached that harmony again. It was unable or afraid to complete the task which thought laid upon it, and instead of restoring the perfect simplicity of the reconciliation which we see in Jesus, it substituted an external and artificial arrangement, whose character was determined according as theology has been swayed at different times in its definition of truth by the prominence it has given to God or to man. Theology has always stopped short at analysis, which it has hitherto regarded as sufficient; it has never recognised that the work of reason is really and always constructive. Reason does its work, not only in analysing but in relating. To explicate, set in order, and arrange is not the sole work of reason; that is merely an effort at clear thinking. The function of reason is to give universal relations to every fact and event, to show the essential character of whatever subject

it considers, and how that character may be viewed as pertaining to a rational universe. If theology, therefore, be religion interpreted by reason, it must mean not merely the tenets of religion stated in an orderly and logical manner, but religion presented in its fundamental aspect and idea, as a rational element in a rational and comprehensible universe. Where theology falls short of this it may still be called a logical, but scarcely a rational, statement of religion.

There is, therefore, a preliminary question which precedes all theology, but which theology never in these early ages considered—namely, whether such an analysis of the ideas of God and of man as left them abstract entities, isolated by themselves, and unrelated to life and the universe, was either permissible or possible; whether either of them can be set up in a permanent separation by itself, or, being so set up, can ever be rationally comprehended in such an isolation. In other

words, can we conceive God truly apart from the world, and out of all relation to present reality? or what kind of reality can we posit of the Deity which withdraws him from all that we know, from all that we recognise to be real and actual? The being which we attribute to God is not made more divine when emptied of all contents which relate it to us or to the universe; the negation of all varied character and human attributes does not refine or purify the divine nature, but only makes it unreal and unsubstantial. To separate God from all inner and immanent connection with the world is not to separate him from the taint of materialism or the fear of limitation, but only to protect from supposed contamination an abstract idea which, because it has no such relation to life, has no reality of its own.

It was this separation which an imperfect system of thought made in its first endeavour to rationalise the reconciliation of faith. It is to be attributed to no

degeneration or decay of faith that this apparent isolation of the Deity was brought about, or that this sense of separation supervened, as though the living bond of religion had been broken; nor was it the failure of spiritual life in man which led to the artificial means employed to meet and overcome it. This whole theological relation of the Deity to the world was rather due to the forward action of man's mind in the sphere of religion; for it could not remain satisfied with a faith which did not understand itself or God, which was merely an individual feeling, and was incapable of being set forth either for the comprehension of the religious mind itself or for the preaching of it to others. Faith, as religious feeling, was locked up in the heart, and could neither become the subject of rational consideration nor the matter of teaching. As it was, it left religion a mystery incapable of statement, expansion, or solution; and the thought of the Christian Church could

not rest until it had formulated its faith in the language and in the ideas of reason.

That the faith of the Church should be not only described as an immediate relation of the soul with God, but also recognised and mediated as rational, was the natural ambition of its theology; but its very first step in this process of mediating its faith through reason brought with it a separation and sundering of its elements which theology never again wholly united. The immediate union for faith remains eternal and unbroken; but it is only from a higher function of reason and the widening range of thought that the harmony can be restored which thought destroyed. For thought is as permanent as faith; and the reason which theology could not trust enough, must still be accounted sufficient for itself, and allowed to redeem its own pledge—namely, that the harmony of faith will be more fully harmonised when demonstrated by thought. The temple of faith seemed destroyed, but it was to be built

up again in the mind ; the religion, which had been perfect in life, was to be restored again as perfect in reason ; and the image of religious truth was to be more perfectly formed, because bearing the new semblance of an intelligible and rational consciousness. Thought took up the work of faith to complete it, not to destroy it ; and if the first effort left the reconciliation incomplete, yet theology cannot again fall back on the unconscious unity of faith to supply its own deficiency : thought must go forward to find in itself the ultimate solution which theology foresaw and promised.

It is in this way that thought has not yet ever spoken its last word in theology. The spontaneous harmony of faith has never been reached in any theological statement, for its reconciliation has always been artificial and external. But philosophy is able to offer to theology a solution of the religious problem which attempts at least to restore the spontaneous harmony of faith, which was unwittingly broken up

by thought: and this she does in the conception which she affords of the term Spirit. Theology has never gained the true determination of the idea of Spirit. The Bible, indeed, has defined it under its highest religious attribute as Love; and in the language of faith God is a Spirit, because God is Love. But this definition is only for the religious soul, and not for theology. Theology, however, has never sought for an equivalent interpretation of the divine nature in the sphere of reason. The doctrine of love is the highest category in the Christian revelation; but Christian theology knows nothing of it—nothing, that is, of love, pure, simple, and unrestrained; it knows only the revelation of love in logical, not spiritual, relations.

The reason probably is that love refuses to fit itself into a logical sequence of events which it has not itself created. Such a claim, however, of origin and precedence theology could not allow, for it regarded love not as an attribute of reason, but as

an element of faith to be treated as the exception to all rational rules—an erratic and unrestrained tendency of the religious character which, once made supreme, is found acting in contradiction of all order and method. No sooner does theology start with love than love collides with justice, and must be made to moderate its claim. Human love will in fact not moderate its claim, but divine love must not be regarded as so extreme, so one-sided, as to destroy the symmetry of the virtues; for if the virtues and graces cannot be made to work together, theology becomes impossible. In theology, the separation and even opposition of the various virtues was taken for granted, and it was felt that the supremacy of any one would be the destruction of the others. Logically you cannot make any law absolute, or it will come into ultimate conflict with the other laws which regulate the conduct of life. And so long as love is regarded simply as one of many com-

mandments, it cannot be exalted above the rest, but only share with them the artificially arranged realm in which they all have some place. That place for each is regulated not by its own inherent nature or the universality of its character, but only by the external interference of the divine Will. The point of view which theology could not attain was, that the divine Will being love, Love must be the essence of all the commandments, love must be the fulfilling of the law. In such a view of the divine character, or in the actual relations of human life, there was no such collision of the Christian virtues; but to be able to combine them, when once they were postulated as opposed, theology had nothing to offer in the place of personal character, either human or divine, which dominated and harmonised them in the spiritual comprehensiveness of life.

The Christian doctrine of Love, therefore, as an absolute and infinite principle, and as the supreme characteristic of the

divine relation with the human, was not easily dealt with by the theologian, who had to find a place for a non-logical element in a closely logical deduction, and to discover terms of definition in the region of abstract thought for a motive of character which was only met with in the actualities of life. One way was open—namely, to recast the idea of logic altogether, and to seek another order of sequence than that of formal agreement. For the modern mind thinks far less of the ‘formal laws of thought’ than of the natural laws of growth, and is content with any form of argument, however expressed, which shows itself to convey naturally the expansion of one idea, and to be consistent in its course with the growth of the truth which that idea contains. If the statement of any doctrine reveals itself to the mind as an organic development of a fundamental principle, and as a necessary element in the comprehension of the whole truth which seeks

expression, then it is sufficiently logical to satisfy both faith and reason. It is this logic of growth, of comprehensive relation, of organic consistency, which tests the truth of Beauty, Character, or the truth Christian theology had to deal with—namely, the development in ever-varying relations and ever-reconciling progress of this infinite and supreme principle of love. But it was much easier for the theologian to fall back on the categories of thought which the Greek schools supplied, and on conceptions of the divine nature which the Jewish revelation had already laid to his hand, than to formulate new ideas of justice, and holiness, and truth, as they must be conceived when all are united and transformed by the supreme conception of love. Hence the Christian theology first took upon itself a Scholastic and Jewish character, and worked out the new idea of love and grace under the old categories of the previous revelation, which were accepted as

sufficiently near for that purpose. The infinite principle, therefore, which ruled and guided faith toward its ideal of reconciliation was thus from the very first fettered and limited by theology, allowed to act only so far as it could find freedom in a formal system of logical thought, and to produce what results were possible where the underlying relation of God with man was defined not as one of unity but of separation. With this difficulty to meet, it was necessary for theology to find means of reconciliation between the divine and the human which were not in themselves natural or spontaneous, but devised to maintain and elaborate the conception of the Deity as it had already been agreed upon in a Jewish revelation, and as it had to be expressed in terms of Greek thought.

It must, however, be acknowledged that in the first Christian age of theology the mind of man was probably not ready to accept a new definition of logical thought

on lines which seemed to suggest its submission to a principle whose sphere of action was plainly enough limited to faith. Not only were Scholastic ideals supreme in speculative matters, but also man's view of nature at such a time was entirely negative and unscientific. He was quite unable to see in nature's laws the progress of a great organic development, which included in its course the comprehension and transformation of endless varieties of form, because they were but outwardly exclusive, while inwardly they belonged to the same line of evolution. He could not, therefore, be prepared to receive a similar truth in the region of metaphysics, where the demonstration could not be practically displayed. To those already familiarised with such a view of nature, the higher metaphysical law comes with an appeal of probability almost equal to conviction. To him the relation of the material to the spiritual, the seen to the unseen, the finite to the infinite, the

divine to the human, was still restricted to the apparent opposition in experience which such terms of definition expressed, and his conception of reality was not one which could find a place for diversity of character or of movement, but only one which was naturally suggested under the law of contradiction. His mind could not then enter into a view of the world to which these contradictions were not final—a view which could in thought (as the heart did in faith) transcend the opposition of subject and object, nature and spirit; a view which could see them as only correlatives one of another, only different aspects of one common life, and that life Spirit.

It was from the Gnostic philosophy that the first attempt to rise to such a position came, and it offered for the aid of faith an apparent reconciliation of human and divine, and for philosophy an apparent solution of the dualism of material and spiritual. But it was only an apparent solution; for the acceptance of the Gnostic

view of 'emanations' involved a one-sided and visionary attitude to life, and rested really on the pantheistic principle that the union of God and man was one which absorbed the human into the divine, and destroyed the separate personality of the individual. On the other hand, the Christian principle was rooted on the mutual relation of two self-conscious beings, two separated but correlated individuals, whose characters were made perfect not through abstraction of their natural qualities, but only through the relation of the one to the other. If God descended to man, it was through the necessity of a nature which could not abide alone, but was moved to creation by love, and to redemption by grace: the outgoing in the creation of man in love, and the return in the redemption of man in grace, completes the spiritual nature of God. If man ascended to God, it was by the necessity of a nature which could not rest in the limitations of this world, but which

overcame them, and that not by denying and refusing them, but by understanding and transforming them in the light of God's Providence; for the knowledge of earthly limitations, but at the same time the acceptance of them as a means of a higher life, completes the spiritual nature of man. The descent of God, therefore, and the ascent of man, is each in free communion of spirit; for neither God nor man can be thought of as perfect apart from each other.

It is often alleged that it is difficult, or even impossible, to express in terms of philosophy the Christian doctrine of the relation of the divine to the human, or the nature of the spiritual communion between them, without apparently falling into pantheistic phraseology, in which the separate identity of each may seem lost. For faith, it is said, to use exaggerated language in the endeavour to express its longings after God and the experience of the soul in a mystic union with him,

may be natural and excusable, for it is permitted in the atmosphere of religion to see and hear things impossible and unlawful to utter, and to pass in the mystery of religious feeling beyond the confines of literal statement or of scientific accuracy. But when the sphere of religion is invaded by reason, and a rational definition of spiritual experience is attempted, then the language of the heart when translated into philosophic terminology becomes charged with the heterodoxy of Pantheism, into which philosophy betrays religion in a well-meant endeavour to explain and support her doctrine. But the idealistic doctrine of the nature of Spirit, although apparently pantheistic in expression, is only so because it is impossible to express the highest reality in terms of absolute identity; for reality is the relation and final union of differences, not their denial or exclusion. It embodies, therefore, in its definition of reality, or Spirit, the ultimate truth of the universe

as a reconciliation of thoughts which separately are abstract and imperfect, but which find their highest realisation when united in the idea of God. If Spirit, then, be that which continually finds its own life again in whatever seems successively to be opposed to it, and which is able to reconcile to itself and to its visible development all that appears at first sight to contradict its advance, such a doctrine, however pantheistic in expression, in reality is the only one which affords an explanation that preserves the difference of individuality still in the unity. The expression, indeed, of the idea of Spirit is then most easily reached when we grasp the possibility of something being permanent throughout all its changes, something that cannot be known except in change, that cannot develop or fulfil itself in one form only, that comes to its highest growth and expansion by assuming various forms in accommodation to the conditions it has to meet: and this is the expression

of the analogy in the realm of nature and growth for that of spirit. Such an analogy may seem indeed pantheistic when it is stated as a law of nature,—perhaps as the law of development through variation, or as the law of conservation of energy through endless processes of change. But the law of Spirit is Self-consciousness. All the forms which it assumes are in themselves self-conscious, spiritual, and independent. The ideal becomes actual in the individual, for it can never realise itself otherwise ; but if the actual is individual, it thus can reveal its true self-conscious nature, which it completes and perfects by mutually returning itself again to the ideal. The conception of Spirit, therefore, is reached not by excluding the relations and the variety of self-conscious existence which truly belong to the actual, but by finding a unity which is perfected in reciprocal relation and variety, and an ideal which is enriched by recognising and accepting the individual characteristics of

the real. Man is spiritual as well as God. There are oppositions, therefore, between them, and indeed in all the universe, but not oppositions that are permanent; for the universe, being God's, is also at least implicitly spiritual; and all oppositions, though real, are yet, being spiritual, only stages in the general progress of the whole, in a progress which tends more and more to a final unity of all: and this unity of all is no pantheistic absorption, but a reconciliation of individual variety completing its destiny in Spirit.

This doctrine of Spirit is the demonstration in the realm of reason of the nature of the divine Being, as Love,—the expression of a character so inexpressible in the realm of faith. Such a definition of the divine nature allows us rationally to understand the necessity which rules the divine revelation, especially as we have received it under the two great Biblical ideas described as Creation and Redemption. It implies nothing as to the Biblical state-

ment, the actual conditions, or the theological interpretation of either of these as historical events; but it defines them both as eternal necessities in our thought of infinite Spirit. For Spirit is that nature which must realise itself not in the isolation of self-identity, but as the actuality of creation, and which must bring again this actuality from its finite or even sinful condition into union with itself. Whatever creation and redemption may be for theology, they are at least for reason two timeless forms of the divine revelation, two necessary movements in the divine character; and, however represented in words, to be conceived of as eternally true and necessary to thought as the idea of the divine Spirit. Such a definition of the self-revelation of the divine Being conceived as Spirit is indeed different from the idea of it prevalent in the Jewish Church, but it is not a new definition for the Christianity of Jesus. It is only the philosophical equivalent for the expression

of God as the divine Love; the definition is already implied in the supremacy of this thought in the Christian faith; religion has grasped the truth immediately, which philosophy later mediates through reason.

Nor is this a mere reiteration of a truth in different words, a barren translation into another dialect. Instead of this, it may be granted that philosophy has here contributed something of itself to theology. For it is a definition which was impossible to theological ways of thinking, at least when creeds were formed; a definition without which even now the divine grace and love will remain but the ground of an instinctive feeling and not the rational foundation of faith, and without which the expression of these must also remain mechanical and artificial in the accepted explanation of theology. The outstanding complaint against the Christian religion is not against the doctrine of reconciliation, but against the theological statement of it. The Gospel is acceptable to man's heart,

but the theological equivalent for it is repugnant to man's reason. The cause of this is the forcing of a new conception of religion — namely, the reconciliation of human and divine, as implied in the spiritual nature of both, into categories of thought which cannot contain or comprehend such a conception, categories of thought which have for their supreme rule the law of logical contradiction, categories which therefore can have no terms to express the higher reconciliation of apparently opposite natures, except as some arrangement from without, and which much less can define the fulfilment or development of one nature by its consciously passing into service and subordination to another. These ideas are familiar enough to the devout soul in the region of religious faith, and have become familiar even in the region of science and philosophy now, but were unknown and impossible to thought in the days of theological construction.

There seems no reason why theology,

which owed so much to philosophy in these earlier stages, should refuse the aid of philosophy now. Now, when it has a contribution of thought to offer which theology herself has never been able to reach, and which is, both in idea and in its expression through the already familiar analogy of natural laws, so much nearer to the foundation truth of the Christian religion. Theology is content with definitions of grace and love which everywhere else would be rejected as incompetent and contradictory, it upholds a doctrine of religious reconciliation which is both unspiritual and artificial, and it rules the religious life of men by ideals which in social and family life would be considered unworthy. The theological conception of the divine character is everywhere contradicted by the preachers of its Gospel; and the missionaries of its salvation are well content to make the proclamation of it depend on the words and the Cross of Jesus, not on the Church

statements of his doctrines. The reason is, that theology has never yet attained to the use of philosophical categories which are able adequately to express a peculiarly spiritual truth, such as the Christian doctrine of reconciliation, in the language of reason. Theology has laboured with inadequate terminology, and has been able only to express as external and artificial that truth of religion which has for its very essence complete inwardness and spirituality. The discoveries of science and the development of philosophy have now accustomed us to the statement of corresponding ideas in their own spheres; there is a terminology suited to the rational expression of spiritual truths now at the disposal of theology, and the old inadequate definitions of this reconciliation of human and divine may be abandoned. Such an abandonment need not be considered an abandonment of the truth. For a thought in close analogy to this Christian idea of reconciliation is at the

root of all modern philosophy; so that it certainly implies no violence to religion to ask for the restatement of the doctrine of reconciliation in a terminology which does justice to its essential meaning, and which permits the replacing of spiritual conceptions for mechanical and legal ones.

This ruling idea in modern philosophy is closely akin to the characteristic of faith. The characteristic which gives to faith the implication of rationality is that it regards its object from an ideal standpoint. It does not regard the universe from the tentative attitude of science, nor from the abstract position of the individual understanding, but rather from the point of view which sees it as a whole, as a unity, as a Reconciliation. Its first view of the universe is in reality its final view. It does not progress to anything wider: it grasps first the idea of the whole, and then from this idea explains its details. This conviction of faith, that there is an ultimate reconciliation of all things in God, that

all things are working together for good to those who love God, and that the events and incidents of life can only be understood in the light of God's eternal purpose,—this conviction is rational to the very core. And the expression of this implicit rationality of faith has become possible to modern philosophy, because it alone has adequately conceived such an idea of Spirit as can offer the definition of a spiritual truth like this in the realm of reason, and can adequately convey the metaphysical idea of Spirit when it clothes it in the analogy of organic growth.

This idea in its simple illustrative form is implied in many of the Gospel parables and similes, and shows its natural adaptation to spiritual truth in that it has become the guiding thought of all Christ's teaching. The simplicity of Christ's teaching is that it is suggestive, conveys a thought and an idea without complications of detail and of argument. It is a seed cast into the ground, and left to grow; a little leaven,

to leaven gradually the whole. It is an appeal, but seldom a personal persuasion; it is the appeal of a commanding thought or truth. The idea of growth was peculiarly fitted to this suggestive type of preaching, and it has become the classic illustration of Christianity. But it finds no place in Christian theology; for it contains a truth—the truth of organic development—which is at variance with the supreme logical law of non-contradiction, the fetish of the syllogism. This logic of the understanding which has formed and dominated theology must be replaced by a logic of Spirit, if the truth of Christianity is to be defended or defined. For the ruling thought of such a logic is organic, not syllogistic. The ideal of an organism is one which modern philosophy has made its own, and it is the only one which at all approaches to the ideal of spiritual truth. For an organism implies first that it is an end in itself, fulfils its highest being by an inner growth, and develops

from the necessity of the principle or type of life which underlies it. A plant is not to be understood bit by bit while it grows, as science dissects it to show us how; for there is a unity of the plant which science ignores but which philosophy perceives, and is able to express, only by reference to the final ideal of it already present from the very beginning; for each part receives its meaning only as seen in the ideal of the whole. The last is in reality first; the ideal comes before the actual; the fulfilment is perceived before the growth is begun. The process of varied growth, therefore, the continual change of form, is but the necessary realisation of the original idea. The analogy of the organism is the only possible definition for the nature and expansion of spiritual truth. Such teaching does not rely upon formal deduction or laws of thought, but only upon the consistent development, the self-fulfilling aim, of the idea which it contains. The Christian teaching thus would become,

as it went hand in hand with its philosophic counterpart, a truly rationalised system; the process of theological growth would become not one of artificial and supplementary additions, but the ordered development of a fundamental principle; and the method of Jesus would be justified, for this is the only course which spiritual teaching like his own could take.

But, also, an organism implies the essential unity of the life it represents through all its phases of growth and apparent change, to its final realisation in the gathering up of all its previous conditions: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Or, as it is put in even a more assured and radical statement of these transitions: except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit, —where the transition is represented as a change even from death to life, with still a unity preserved. There is no syllogism of the logical understanding which can

cope with such teaching, for it expresses as the essence of spiritual life just those very contradictions of being which the logical understanding exists to detect and destroy. And so long as Christian theology is guided in its interpretation of Christian truth by the syllogisms of the logical understanding, it has first to cast all the truths it wishes to express into an argumentative form, which exhausts their spirituality before they find expression.

This, then, is a real gift of modern thought to theology, an organic terminology. The new definition which it can give to such terms as Spirit, Life, Individuality, Reconciliation, and others, enables theological thought to pass naturally—or, we may say, in the highest sense logically—in the way of growth from an initial idea onwards to its full development, without the necessity of calling in other conceptions to complete and substantiate them, because the initial idea, like that of an organism, contains already the whole

development implicitly in itself. The idea of Spirit especially will be found full of Christian truth. It contains as its peculiar organic principle the idea of Reconciliation. From this a theology of reconciliation naturally arises, and expresses itself not in arbitrary arrangements and mechanical methods, but in organic sequence of thought, without other help than the necessary evolution of the idea, and without fear of contradiction from any formal or abstract laws of reasoning. For if the divine nature be such that it timelessly and eternally goes forth from itself as creation, finds itself more completely realised in that which it creates, and returns to its fullest life along with the creation which seemed to be external to itself, but is found through its spontaneous relation with the divine to be implicitly spiritual also,—then the possibility of a consistent evolution of a theology of Spirit is assured. But until the divine character can be viewed in such a light—that is, not as already apart and

perfect in isolation, but as a character which naturally and necessarily brings itself to full spirituality only in union with the actual creation; as a character which does not lose its spirituality or self-consciousness by immanence in that creation; as a character whose infinite personality and perfection do not lie in separation from, but rather in coalition with, finite forms: until the divine can be so regarded, all theological definitions of the action of the divine Being will be expressed as something not only artificial, but even contradictory of all true spiritual teaching.

But if thus, from such a definition of the divine character, the idea of Reconciliation is freed from an unnatural and complicated relation with the divine, so also on the human side there is implied the same idea of natural reconciliation as possible in man's true spirituality. The very definition of the divine carries with it the inherent spirituality of the Creation; for,

as it is the necessary outgoing and revelation of God, it has within it the potentiality of spirit, of union with God, and of its full realisation in relation with that which created it. The reconciliation, therefore, is not one-sided; for as the divine finds its own fulfilment in taking creation up again into itself, so the opposition of material to spiritual, of human to divine, is not permanent or contradictory; but only a form of transition in the fulfilment of both, a separation which is ever being narrowed, and which at last will be overcome. The character of the Infinite is not negation of all limit; the character of the Finite is not exclusion from the universal. The true infinite lies in the nature of Spirit—that is, in the power of reconciling the finite to itself, that God may be all in all; and the true finite is at least implicitly spiritual, as that which is ever waiting for the manifestation of God, and able in the end to become one of the sons of God.

VI.

FAITH AND PROGRESS

VI.

Faith and Progress.

It may almost be said that the value of human progress lies more in the idea contained in the word than in its actual fruits. These fruits are indeed more evident and substantial than the idea which has produced them, and supply at the first glance the only apparent ground we have to believe in progress at all, and the chief practical reason why we should desire its continuance. That men should be fed and clothed and educated, and should attain even to refinement and luxury ; that they should enjoy the benefits which accrue from the study of the arts and sciences, and the advancing civilisation of every succeeding age ;

that increasing knowledge should find its chief value in its utility and its practical application to the comforts and culture of life: such aims as these, and such results, are commonly regarded as the most valuable tokens of progress and the blessings of civilisation.

But the true element in human progress lies deeper than any of these external and practical results with which it is so usual to identify it; and the ultimate value which it possesses for humanity is to be found entirely apart from the rate of advance it produces in comfort or convenience. Its value for us lies rather in this: the conception that the history of the human race is a progressive one, is ruled from within by a law of advance and development, and takes its place under the gradual evolution of a rational process. We rejoice in all the products of civilisation and in all the varied applications of science to the wellbeing of humanity,

but we rejoice more in the consistent growth of the tendency which underlies these results, and the undying faith we have in the destiny of the race which attains them. The satisfaction which we feel in the material prosperity of the race is only in itself material, because we share in its prosperous conditions; but the satisfaction which we enjoy in contemplating the hidden cause of human prosperity, the inherent value and dignity of human life, this is a spiritual and lasting satisfaction of the soul. For this we are dependent not on the external conditions of life such as will prove or uphold the continual rate of prosperity or progress, but on the deep-seated faith that progress is the law of that life, and that even in defiance of apparent failure from time to time, or even apparent retrogression in one age as compared with another, yet that humanity cannot deny itself or finally fail in the achievement of that with which it has been inspired.

This inspiration and goal of human progress may perhaps be fairly enough expressed in religious words as the gradual 'overcoming' of the world, if by this we mean the ascendancy and supremacy of Spirit in the universe. For we must be careful not to import into such an expression any idea of a permanent opposition in the universe between the spirit of man and the world which he inhabits, or to regard the progress of man as the course of a victorious crusade against the natural conditions and surroundings of life. The victory of human progress is not one of opposition and destruction, in which the spirit of man rises to crush and subdue the world of nature and of time, as a foreign and unpropitious element in his experience, which must be eliminated or at least held in subjugation that the history of man may have a free and prosperous course. Far from being a victory of opposition and denial, it is a victory of 'faith' alone which overcomes the

world. For the idea of Progress is possible to man only in so far as he believes that there is one principle at work throughout the whole universe of God, whether in nature or man, whether organic or inorganic, material or spiritual, temporal or eternal. It is faith in this inherent unity, and this tendency of all to an ultimate reconciliation, which is the ground of our faith in human progress; and it is because this faith in an all-embracing unity which centres itself in God, and will at last find all in God, is an eternal inspiration of the human heart, that the idea of progress never fails from the mind of man and will not let him rest. But it is only so far as he works in the light of this faith and believes in this unity, in so far as he approaches both nature and life with the idea that they will minister to his good and enrich his spirit, that he will find progress possible and the infinite goal of his destiny drawing near. The world and life reveal

their secrets ; but they who would gain a victory over them must first bend to serve them.

The proof, therefore, or the denial of human progress is not to be attempted by any criticism of its results, or the comparison of favourable or unfavourable symptoms from age to age, for the most glowing eulogy of all that civilisation has accomplished will never establish its permanency in the mind of man ; nor will any denial of its unlimited increase ever uproot the idea of its continued necessity in the heart of one whom it has already inspired. There is as much to be said on the one side perhaps as on the other ; or at least there is not enough to be said for the practical advantages of progress ever to prove it to be a victory of faith—that is, a necessity of our thought or an element of our spiritual life. But there are two views of human progress which, if unanswerable, would strike at the root of such a conception, because they refer not to the re-

sults as unsatisfactory, but to the aim or motive underlying them.

The first of these objections deals directly with the idea of progress, and refuses to allow it, by reducing the whole history of humanity to the outcome of an irrational impulse. Any objection is fatal to the idea of progress which denies to it a consistent and rational movement, which takes from it the idea of development, and resolves it into the result of a blind will forcing itself into motion without aim or method, without rule or limit, without thought or determination, but only in obedience to an inherent compulsion, which by chance has taken the form of the present creation and the actual history of man as we see it. The results of such a blind force in the creation of the universe and in the course of history may be good or bad in practical results according to our individual estimation, pleasant or unpleasant. For the ordinary purposes of life this matters not. For it cannot be said that

the fair fabric is undermined, or that the beauty and the culture of the world sink down in a common ruin with the sordid and the base, or that the products of nature—material, historical, artistic—are at once bereft of value to the spirit of man if here they are deprived of the hidden principle of reason. But to such a view of history it may be replied that it rests for its proof on the assumption that man is able mentally to discern and distinguish between what is blind force and what is rational movement; that he is able to stand aside and regard in thought the world-chaos from a point of view outside of it; that he is not himself a part of this chaos or carried on in the blind rush of its unregulated course, but that he has a spirit which is able to discern the chaos and unreason around him and divide the light from the darkness. But such an assumption involves that man has within him some standard by which to test and compare the chaotic with the cosmic, the

irrational with the rational, and the confusion of the external with some ideal of order within. The presence, therefore, of such a principle in man involves the conclusion that the world itself contains the very standard of reason by which it is able to condemn the irrational, the standard of reason by which it can pronounce that human history lacks the very elements of a regulated progress, the standard of reason by which the wandering course of events without is compared and contrasted with some sense of order which belongs to the self-conscious mind within. But to postulate a standard of reason is implicitly to declare the possibility of progress.

The second view of human progress which would also be fatal to the idea of it is one which does not indeed deny the presence of order and evolution in its movement, but which attributes to it an irrational or inadequate aim. We find this view expressed by those who regard the whole structure of human attainment as built up

on the ideal of material prosperity, of personal advantage, consciously or unconsciously directing all the efforts of men to further advance. If the motive be unconscious, it may be set down as the action of a principle inherent in nature herself, by which the survival of the fittest is maintained, and the course of history is fulfilled by a continued adaptation of life to the wants and exigencies of the time. If, on the other hand, the principle be conceived as acting consciously in man, it reduces the aim and motive of life to the production of material comforts and luxuries, or of those things that are valuable for defence or aggression, for competition or success. In either case the highest doctrine of life becomes utilitarian, and the intellect of man is bound and limited in its scope by the satisfaction of finite ends.

As this view of an evolutionary doctrine of civilisation and progress has been most recently and forcibly set forth by Mr

Benjamin Kidd in his book on *Western Civilisation*, it may be examined here most conveniently in that form. This is a record of the advance of man from 'subordination to the present to that of the future,' of his progress from 'the supremacy of existing conditions to those conditions that pass far beyond the present,' of his growth from 'the limitations of a political consciousness to a universal and spiritual consciousness.' It is evident that this is just the record of the general progress of the human race, as every school of thought would be inclined to regard it; a statement of advancing civilisation which every historian would concede. The difficulty, therefore, of criticising the evolutionary argument of the book by criticism of its details is evident, for it affords a really elevated reading of these historical details and illustrations; it brings forward the very illustrations and examples that every historian would collect to prove the general advance of humanity in its emancipation from the control of the

present and the gradual ascendancy of the claims of the future and of the spiritual. We are quite at one with him in almost all the examples that his book contains, gathered from ancient and modern history, to prove the thesis of the book, that the progress of humanity has been, as he alleges, from the limitations of the existing conditions of the present, whether in politics or religion or social sciences, to the wider apprehension of universal claims, which may reasonably enough be represented in his words as 'the subordination of the present to the future.'

The right and the wrong of the book can only be set out in meeting the general argument at the very beginning, and questioning there its truth and validity. The book is openly in praise of evolution, and is an attempt to reconstruct from a new point of view a system of 'evolutionary philosophy.' The first and final criticism of any evolutionary philosophy, or any evolutionary interpretation of history,

is simply to see that it confines itself to the use of methods and arguments which evolution supplies. If the argument is from nature and natural processes, it must not stray beyond these, or take for granted any idea which is not found within these. But it is on this postulation of ideas not provided within the naturalistic systems of philosophy, but used for the explanation of naturalistic processes, that almost all evolutionary theories of the universe and of human progress rely. If, therefore, it can be shown of any evolutionary theory of the universe that it uses methods and arguments which are beyond the realm of natural causes, nothing more is required. For if evolutionary philosophy has to seek the aid of reason and of spirit in setting forth her view of the universe and human progress, then we may take for granted the priority of reason and spirit as necessary elements in any interpretation of the world as it is.

Mr Kidd's book brings forward once

more the claim of a materialistic explanation of the world, for in it all the facts of life and progress are reduced to the laws of an evolutionary development. Whatever arguments, therefore, have ever been available on the side of a rational, as against a naturalistic, explanation of the universe, are available here. The only argument we need, however, is to show that Mr Kidd from beginning to end of the book postulates and takes for granted categories of thought which no naturalistic or evolutionary system can supply. He reads into an evolutionary philosophy thoughts which come not from the region of evolution, but from the realm of reason.

The fundamental position of Mr Kidd's book is the reiterated opposition between the ascendancy of the 'present,' and the ascendancy of the 'future.' This is the touchstone of all progress in the world of nature and of man: the progress from subordination to existing conditions forward to an accepted subordination to future

conditions; from an efficiency for the present to an efficiency 'projected' into the future; from a good which is individual and present to a good which is universal and future. Of this it may be asked, Why is it necessary to make such a division between the present and the future? They are both elements in the course of progress, and the one passes imperceptibly into the other. The transition is never-ending; the present is but a section cut (for example, by Darwin) in a continuous growth, and there is no point at which we can say, This is the present, that is the future. A sacrifice or a gain in the present is destined for the future; there is no more moral meaning in the one than in the other. It does no good, therefore, to the argument to speak as Mr Kidd does of the present sacrifice affecting 'vast stretches of time'; that cannot render the sacrifice of individuals of any more ethical value than when they are regarded as sacrificed for the present.

The present is but a passing stage in the realisation of the future, and the future is practically everywhere present.

But even if it were possible to make such a distinction between the value of a sacrifice or a gain for the race in the present and one that affects the future in the course of evolution, is it allowable to do so from the point of view of natural selection? Does nature herself, or any natural process, know anything of a future? Can natural selection, by its elimination of any individual now, or by its increase of efficiency to any species now, be said to do this with a view to the future of the race? The action of natural selection cannot transcend the present in intention; it can only be in and for the present, though all such action is for the benefit of the race in the future. To endow any natural process with action which has a distinct reference to the future as contrasted with the present, is to endow nature with an ethical idea borrowed from thought. To believe

that nature is conscious of any distinction between present and future, and to credit her action with any reference to what is beyond the present, is to credit her with a form of action which is the distinction of reason alone. To be able to discern or divide between the present and the future, even without any ethical intention, requires that there be an underlying permanent Self, which is capable of holding the sensations of the present, to combine and compare them with those which succeed as time passes by. But this power is possessed by no natural process. The processes of nature go on unconsciously. She cannot arrest them to compare in them the present with the future: the future only grows out of the present. The great stress, therefore, which Mr Kidd lays on this new reading of the evolutionary process as having a distinct reference to the future instead of, as Darwin considered, a reference only to the present, does not seem of much force. It is not an argument

supplied by a fact in nature, but only an analogy for the work of nature from that of reason. It cannot, therefore, form a reliable basis for the architectural development of history and civilisation and religion which is to rise upon it. There is, indeed, something plainly artificial in the selection of such a distinction as this between present and future to rule the whole course of history; and this sense of artificiality can never be got rid of unless Mr Kidd will grant to nature a rational, if unconscious, purpose underlying her sacrifice of the present to the future, which is of course an idea that his evolutionary philosophy forbids.

In a similar line of reasoning it may be asked, What is the 'necessity of the race' which rules the course of evolution? It seems only to be regarded as the 'future,' without any further definition. And it must be difficult for an evolutionary philosophy to define it in any other terms. It is empty of all rational or ethical

meaning. Evolutionists take for granted that natural selection will always mean progress; but that cannot be known. Nature certifies nothing of the kind. The present sacrifice may be in vain; the 'necessity of the race' may prove a phantasm. Evolutionary philosophy can say nothing of it more than that it is a blind unknown force. Nature knows no necessity in the future. That a thing has always happened through long stretches of time does not convey the thought that it cannot happen otherwise; and this is what necessity means. And to any natural processes which seem to illustrate the idea of a necessary cause and effect, it is the mind which adds the interpretation that they will never happen otherwise. Necessity implies something universal and eternal. Nature cannot offer us that; and no evolutionary philosophy has a right to postulate such a category in its explanation of natural processes. It is a category borrowed from a phil-

osophy in which mind is the ultimate explanation, and reason the ultimate law, of the world; and it therefore demands the priority, not of nature, but of spirit.

Mr Kidd's argument could not move a step without the continual help of these categories of reason, and of such others as 'law,' 'ideal,' 'consciousness,' 'personality,' and the like, all of which he uses with freedom and liberality. But the use of such terms in an evolutionary philosophy cannot escape the objections already made — namely, that they are borrowed from another sphere to explain nature, which does not explain herself. Nature knows nothing of the very laws by which her processes are guided. The *idea* of a law, as the *idea* of necessity, belongs to reason only; it is the explanation which the mind brings with it to the interpretation of nature. Not any number of examples can ever constitute a law: the idea of a law is something added to the examples, when the mind has taken them

together and compared them. Nature works on unconsciously, but the mind of man interprets and classifies that work according to ideas of order and reason which the mind brings with it. All evolutionary philosophy presupposes and takes for granted the idea of order and unity in nature; but that also is one of the categories of reason which the mind demands before any interpretation of nature is possible, and without which all science would fall to the ground. The book is only another unconscious tribute to the necessity of regarding the universe not as a blind development of nature, but as the expression of an underlying rational order,—unconscious in nature, conscious in man.

And of such a naturalistic view of life and progress we ask, Is it conceivable that the spirit of man can ever be content with what is professedly finite? that the spirit which is able to conceive the infinite should ever willingly rest short of

it? But the fundamental weakness of all materialistic theories lies in the confusion of thought made between an endless number of finite aims and the infinite itself. The infinite, however, is not a mere aggregation of finites, a mere exhaustless succession of temporal conditions. The infinite is characterised by the idea, not by the time, it contains; and the idea of it is not possible of expression either in terms of time or of material conditions, however they be multiplied or magnified. The attainment of a countless number of finite comforts and blessings is not the attainment of the infinite; the possession of endless goods is not the possession of the infinite good. A long history of material progress has much to show for itself, but by no process can a material evolution be transformed into a spiritual development, a finite into an infinite; and man, who is inspired by the thought of the infinite, will not for ever mistake the one for the other. For either man

is not a rational and spiritual being, or else the history of his progress must be ruled by rational aims and spiritual ideals.

Now, in opposition to all such views, Christian faith holds that the progress of man is neither an irrational chaos ruled by the impulse of a blind power behind, nor a search for material prosperity in competition and success, but is rather a gradual victory over the world, won by faith in the destiny of the world itself.

If we consider first the world of Nature, it is by faith in nature that man overcomes nature; for all science and discovery, all progress and invention, are possible to man only in so far as he believes in the order and law that lie concealed in the realm of nature's work. That there is any human science, or any hope of progress, depends entirely on the faith of man that he lives in a rational universe and works in a world of order and method. This is not a deduction from experience or only a vague dream, but the faith of a rational being

who demands a rational universe without as the counterpart of that within, and who cannot rest in the contradiction which would ensue if he conceived it possible that the guarantee of his own reason was denied by the world in which he lives. That the universe is rational is as much a postulate of man as that he is rational himself; his own self-conscious reason is incomplete without a reliance on the unconscious rationality of the world which surrounds him. In this faith he works and serves in nature's field; in this faith at last he discovers all her hidden treasure: 'this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'

. The same thought returns from another point of view—namely, that nature seems to have no end in herself, but finds it in ministering to the spiritual life of man. Nature herself is unconscious, but becomes conscious in man; she is ever reaching forward to consciousness, and now and then seems almost to touch it; but the

sphere of her utility at least is in serving and enriching the life of man. The natural life cannot comprehend itself, but it reaches its highest value and finds its ultimate goal in rendering itself up for the good of the spiritual life in man. Nature in all her forms of beauty, and strength, and order, does not exist for herself alone, but for the intellect and mind of man, to form the counterpart of his inner spiritual life, and to draw out all the possibilities that would remain undiscovered there were there no sphere of external life to minister to their growth. Man by himself is incomplete; the half of his life is outside of him, but he finds it in the ministrations of nature. By this faith he overcomes the world, and instead of finding it to be an enemy to his spiritual welfare, learns that the inner life is the richer for being shared with the outer.

If we turn now to the world of Mankind and the progress of the human race, we find that the same rule applies, and that

whatever progress we may conceive to be possible in the unity and development of the race will be possible only in so far as we seek to gain a victory by faith in what that race is, and what man in his true nature is capable of and destined to. In dealing with men we naturally expect an opposition both to progress and to unity from the wills and interests and characters of men which we do not meet with in subduing nature. And there are not only the varied interests of individuals, but of different races and nations, separated by geographical and national distinctions, incapable apparently of any reconciliation or communion of work. Besides which, again, there is even the traditional doctrine that such unity, far from conferring blessing and progress, would practically destroy the salt of all life, by obliterating those distinctions and rivalries of trade, those competitive emulations for power and empire, which animate and inspire the different races of mankind. To overcome

this world of mankind it seems as though not faith in their unity, but in their jealousy and strife, were the only hope of advance or prosperity; that here it is to be not the victory of faith, but the victory of war. But yet there lies beneath all the rivalry and opposition of men a doctrine of faith deeper still, and that is, that individual man is by himself but an isolated and imperfect part of the human organism, that humanity is indeed an organism of interdependent parts which can find their true life only in the unity of the whole. Man is created not an isolated, but a social, being; his nature is spiritual, and a spiritual being can perfect itself only in relation with others. It is not only what is called a religious doctrine or a counsel of perfection to say that in saving our life we lose it, but that in losing we save it; for this is true of human life in all its aspects and interests. The contradiction is but on the surface, the truth lies below: that in fellowship and unity, in sympathy and

love, the life of man becomes fuller and richer; that his nature grows and develops when opened to the influences of a larger life than his own. It is faith in this wider life of man, faith in the growing consciousness that a rational being cannot live in isolation from the rest of the rational universe of God, or from the interests of his fellow-men: it is faith in this that alone will overcome this distracted world of mankind, and finally bring unity and sympathy out of all the rivalry and strife. The progress of man will thus mean the progress of his spiritual nature, or at least the continued subordination of his material interests to the gain of a higher end: that is the true consecration of all life, even in its meanest forms—namely, the pre-eminence of a spiritual standard, which directs and guides the whole. But that is conceivable only as a victory of faith.

There is another world beyond both the world of nature and the world of man which has still to be overcome and gained

for the progress and advancement of the race,—the world of God, or the spiritual world. It may be asked how this unseen self-conscious world of spirit, which is so near and yet so far, so high beyond our natural life and yet so close as our spiritual,—how this is to be overcome, and to take its place as one of the possessions of mankind in the process of reducing the universe to itself. This world is also to be overcome only by faith, by believing that its nature and secrets and laws are revealed to us truly, as they are recognised in the ideals we have of them in our moral and spiritual consciousness. The spiritual kingdom becomes ours in the certainty we possess of the reality of all these; that these are the reliable, the permanent, and eternal part of life; that without these all certainty is lost, all guidance denied; that if we have not confidence in our ideals of duty, of truth, of purity, we can have confidence in nothing, and that faith in these is faith in the eternal. The laws of the moral and

spiritual life are their own guarantee: they are ultimate and absolute; they have nothing beyond on which they depend but God alone. Their value is their sanction; which may be proved by the negative argument also, that if we do not have faith in these, then life is not worth living, and all progress becomes vain and unreal. If we lose faith in these, then we need not care whether we retain either the kingdom of natural evolution or that of human progress. For this, the best part of life, is to be gained also by faith: we can only conquer and possess it when we depend on its reality in our daily life; and we only know the fulness and the greatness of our present life when we learn to walk in the light of it.

It may be said, indeed, that to overcome this varied world of human experience by the long service of faith alone will prove a slow victory and a slow progress, and that it holds out little prospect to men of early or definite results. It seems still to

be a life in the ideal, so distant and unattainable is the goal. It may be so measured as a matter of time; but time is not the proper standard by which to measure any progress towards the ideal, or even to reassure and encourage those who are looking for results. Time does not matter much to those who know that they are at least treading the right road, and that every day's experience is 'working hope.' The attainment of the ideal—the completion of the divine purpose in the world—cannot indeed be stated in terms of time at all: the thought of the ideal transcends both time and experience. And yet it is real, and not merely a dream. But it is real to faith only, and will be a victory of faith. In one sense, of course, time may be said to be ever bringing such a consummation nearer; but in another sense it is even now present with us, for its certainty depends not on a continued progress in time and a gradual verification in experience, but it depends on the

security of the thought that the ideal is already contained in the actual, that the ideal is the truth of the real. When we have grasped the thought that the progress of spirit is to embrace and to reconcile all to itself, not by destruction but by completion and fulfilment of each individual part, then we have the certainty of reason to rely upon—namely, that faith in the world means faith in progress, that victory is assured though time delay it. This is not faith in mere feeling, but faith in reason, in a universal reason which our own individual reason demands as the basis of the history both of nature, and man, and God.

A slow victory by faith in all the elements that go to make up the history of the universe is better than wrong methods of forcing apparent results. A distrust of nature, that it is chaotic and unregulated; a distrust of man, that he is ruled only by ideals of individual selfishness; a distrust of God, that he is external to the universe

and arbitrary in his dealings with it,—such a method or rule of action cannot but be wrong, for it reduces both the world and human life to a futile and meaningless course, without purpose and without hope. And man cannot rest in that, for he is conscious of something better in himself; and what man is conscious of as the final reality of his own life there must be some certainty of attaining in the universe.

Nor can we believe in any method of forcing results from without. It is impossible in the relation of man to nature, and it is superficial and temporary in the dealings of man with man. Neither civilisation nor morality will submit to force, not even to legislation. There is an element of spontaneity in both these spheres of progress which will not be denied, and progress under pressure ceases to be progress at all. The ideal of one age cannot be forced upon another; the ideals of each age must come in their own course, and be wrought out in faith.

And if these views be true in relation to the larger sphere of the life of nature and the history of man, they are also true in the closer relations of daily life and individual experience. The world which we have each to overcome is only to be overcome in the same way, by faith that it contains in itself the elements of reason and of progress for our own good. It may seem hard to impress on men in poverty and pain that not distrust or denial, but faith alone, is the path of victory. But it is so: no world of experience can be truly overcome by denying it and thrusting it from us. We cannot overcome life by merely excluding from it what is unpleasant or painful; we cannot divide life in two, and persuade ourselves that we have overcome it only by retaining the one half of it. It must all work together for good, or it still remains foreign to us and irreconcilable. By faith alone, by faith in all, is life to be subdued. By faith even in sin, that there lies at the

root of it also something not at first or inherently evil, but capable of good, must man try to reconcile all unto himself, and so unto God, and to the divine purpose which is to work out good. If life is to be saved, we must believe in life. If man is to progress, he must believe in humanity. This is the impulse and inspiration which Christianity affords. It knows nothing of distrust and denial; it gives men something to believe in, something that is ideal, something that overcomes the world by faith, for it gives man Jesus Christ.

It is in such a view as this that the true idea of religious Teleology lies—namely, in the progress of all under a rational purpose to a Reconciliation in God. We do not look now to the old form of mechanical and external adaptation of means to ends, of peculiar and marvellous ingenuity in the works of nature, to reveal the being or the wise purpose of a Deity. The ‘argument from design’ has been removed from such an external sphere of

incidental coincidences, to rest more upon the gradual growth and development of an inner principle of unity, rising through manifold variations into an ultimate harmony of the universe. The victory of faith in such a progress of the world towards its ideal in God is in reality the victory of Spirit.

THE END.

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